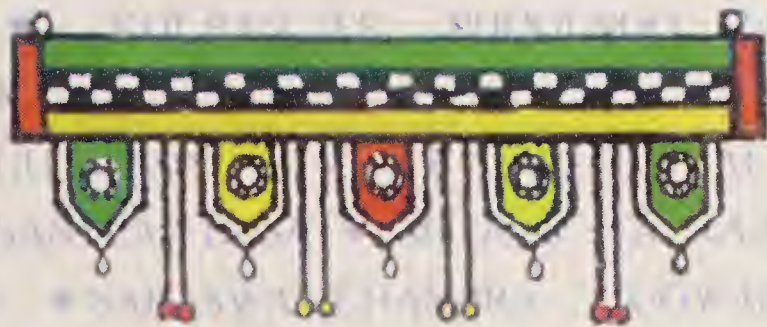



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INDIAN CLASSICS



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INDIAN CLASSICS —GUJARATI

DR. CHANDRAKANT MEHTA

Translation

PALLAVI MARU



PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

A Classic, they say, is a book which people praise but do not read. The book is praised because it is supposed to embody the best of human thought. The present series, Classics of India is designed to bring out the best in Indian thought in a form which makes these great books readable.

Our plan is to request eminent litterateurs in every major Indian language to identify and select the classics of their language (we admit that there may be some difference of opinion in the selection but than no selection can ever be foolproof) and then retell the contents in simple language. We have also requested them to give reasons why the particular work has been regarded as a classic and tell us something about the author also.

According to the plan, we propose to publish the work first in the language from which the classics have been identified and then to have these translated in all major Indian languages. This way we hope to make available the contents of all the classics of all Indian languages for everyone, irrespective of his/her mother-tongue.

The present selection, compilation and abbreviation of the Classics in Gujarati has been accomplished by Dr. Chandrakant Mehta.

We hope the readers will welcome our effort and find it useful.

Dr. Om Prakash Kejariwal

PREFACE

Bharat is a multilingual country and a person having knowledge of one language is hardly aware of the great works from other languages. In order to create the awareness in a reader, the Publications Division of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India planned to publish brief compilations of fictions of distinction, from different languages and translate them in various Indian languages. I was allotted the work to compile selected literary creations from Gujarati language.

I have selected 15 novels, which include a play titled “Koi Ek Phool Nu Naaam To Lo” (Do Take Name of a Flower) which was selected and produced among other plays of Indian languages on Delhi Doordarshan.

Here I have selected only fifteen out of the distinct creations, after all the best cannot be too many. The fiction's selection is done after viewing from different angles, e.g. *Saraswatichandra* is a social novel written during the end part of 19th century, while *Paralysis* represents later period of 20th century and gives us the glimpse of the modern society. There are historical novels like “Gujarat No Naath” (*The Ruler of Gujarat*), *Janamteep* (*Life Imprisonment*) are included here while existentialists story like *Amruta* is also there. The fictions from novelists like Kundanika Kapadia and Minal Dikshit too have found place. Shivakumar Joshi's *Sonal Chaaya* (*Golden Shadow*) is based on a diary with a style of its own, is selected. Thus the variety along with the view to give representation to last two eras, is kept in mind. I have included even a novel based on mythological subject, “Madhava Kyaanya Nathi” (Madhava is to be Found no Where).

I am extremely thankful to the officers and especially to Ms. Kalpana Palkhiwala of the Publications Division for entrusting this compilation work to me.

Chandrakant Mehta

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SARASWATICHANDRA

Govardhanram Tripathi

(1855-1907)

(Year of publication - 1885-1905)

GOVARDHANRAM TRIPATHI (1855-1907) reached his zenith with this fiction as great fiction writer. He has cleverly woven contemporary social, political, philosophical and cultural issues in this novel. Besides fiction he has also contributed in the fields of poetry, biography, commentary etc. This novel divided into four parts, contains 1200 pages. The first part was published in 1885 and the last one in 1905. Soon after its publication it was translated in Marathi language. It became so popular among Marathi readers that many reprints were published. Since then this novel has distinct place in the era of early fictions of Indian literature.

About the Novel :

'Saraswatichandra' is one of the best novels of modern Gujarat. It represents in general the life of Gujarat during the early part of 19th century. Though the title given to the book is hero's name, the life style of different strata of the society existing at that time is brought out here. It has represented the new society emerging out of early English education besides depicting the prevalent social condition. The author has also projected an ideal society through the example of monks of Sundargiri. This book is written during the period when Bankimchandra of Bengal wrote 'Anandmath'; hence one finds unbelievable similarities in the two. So exhaustive the subject matter is that some scholars call it "Purana" while some call it an epic. It is believed that Govardhanram has sketched his own multifarious personality through words in this novel.

SARASWATICHANDRA

Kumudsundari, her sister-in-law Alakkishori, childhood friend Vanlila and maid Krishnakalika came to visit family temple of Rajeshwar. They were hustled up in the backyard, as Rana Bhupsingh of Suvarnapur and his councillor, Buddhidhan, the father-in-law of Kumud, were arriving for secret consultations.

Newly married Kumud had won admiration of her in-laws, especially of Alakkishori, her sister-in-law who considered her, the best friend. Compared to her parent's family Kumud found them derived of ideals in contrast. Pramadadhan, her husband was not only uneducated but was also wild, and was no match to her ex-fiance Saraswatichandra. She met him only once when he visited them at Ratnanagar. His last letter of his *gazal* was still near to her heart. Even she get worried "Why would he have disappeared breaking off her engagement?" Of course, like a dutiful wife she tried to achieve Pramaddhan's love. Vanlila shook her and interrupted her thoughts...

"Some one is sleeping off on the bank of this pond..."

"Let him sleep"...

"But he may fall!"

Kumud said, "then wake him up."

He opened his eyes and Kumud saw a familiar face... for flicker of a second, they were locked in each other's. The stranger got up pushing away his book, and walked away. Just then the priest announced departure of Rana. Kumud's eyes followed him. "Why has he come here? How dose it matter now?" She was restless. Buddhidhan approached the ladies; the stranger too came near and introduced himself as Navinchandra. Buddhidhan invited him over lunch. "Hope he accepts..." thought Kumud. "I will not speak to him... be satisfied to see him every day..."

He accepted the invitation and with the answer, she was overjoyed but the dutiful wife's soul disapproved of it.

In few days only, Navinchandra became part of Buddhidhan's household.

One day, Narbheram, the confidante of Buddhidhan who was also trusted person of state administrator Shathrai, visited them to inform, "Sir, Shathrai knows about your secret meeting with Rana. He has also made me write fake correspondences, supposed to have been exchanged between you and Rajbaa, the wife of Rana. He wants to present them to the king on his birthday." Buddhidhan pondered for a while and asked "Narbheram, Bhupsinh will move nearer towards Shathrai and may demand a close confidante of Shathrai to report to him. Will you see that your name is sponsored?" "Sure!" Buddhidhan reflected, "only once Rajbaa threw herself at me... but memory of my lovely Saubhagyadevi helped me steer through the disastrous situation."

Saubhagyadevi entered their room and all his anxieties evaporated. Creaking bed was the only evidence of their mature love.

Navinchandra who occupied the room between the two bedrooms heard everything happening in Buddhidhan and Pramaddhan's bedrooms. He sighed remorsefully, "Kumud, daughter of Vidyachatur and Gunsundari... a lotus... your place is in a pond... not amongst these manipulators. Alas! I never thought of this fate for you..."

At middle of night Navinchandra heard shouts of desperate Alakkishori... Shathrai had sent Jamal to trouble her. Brave Alak tried to defend herself well, even ignited his dhoti, the rouge threw it off... Navinchandra jumped in, had some fight, Jamal pushed a dagger in his shoulder before he was unarmed. Buddhidhan saw Navinchandra lying in pool of blood, shouted for help, Kumud was quick, tore a piece of cloth from her sari. Saubhagyadevi and Alakkisori took over the patient's care and Pramaddhan possessively pulled his wife to their bedroom. Kumudsundari's heart was with the guest.

People of Suvarnapur were tired of corrupt practices of Shathrai and his brother, the chief judge Karvatrai. In order to curb their corrupt practices, Buddhidhan advised Bhupsinh to remain in courtroom whenever any judgement was passed and at times they changed so called justice. Shathrai played easy trick and planted a sexy nautch girl Kalavati for Rana. Thus easily he was removed from the court to enjoy his afternoon affairs with voluptuous Kalavati. The lady would spend day with Bhupsinh and nights with Dushtarai, a police officer who enjoyed the powers of a police commissioner.

Buddhidhan went to Bhupsinh and told tearfully, "Rajbaa is a mother to me... if you have any doubts then I will quit your job. Shathrai wants to present these letters to you on your birthday." Rana got up, wiped the tears of his trusted councillor and assured, "I will hang the culprit." Buddhidhan advised, "Allow Shathrai to present the letters, you throw temper against me as if you rely on Shathrai's information." Buddhidhan advised his family to be more careful. He also asked Navinchandra to take away his family to Lilapur in case of emergency. Navinchandra agreed to offer his services talking as a son of rich businessman of Bombay.

Next day the stateroom opened to public to mark the beginning of Rana's birthday. The celebrations began with the dance of Kalavati. Narbheram came behind Rana and whispered in his ears, "My lord, police officer Dushtarai is carrying affair with Kalavati, right under your nose." Rana lost his cool, went in to his private chamber, ordered others to go out and then asked Shathrai to bring those "letters". Shathrai left eyeing victoriously at Buddhidhan. Buddhidhan entered, "What is all this Ranaji?" "Your Dushtarai is having affair with that prostitute right under my nose!" Exactly at that moment Mahava comes with a bundle of papers and reports to Rana. Rana Bhupsinh roars, "Where is Dushtarai? Call him... what a ploy against my most trusted councillor?" Buddhidhan pleaded, "please, Ranaji keep the evidence..." "Fine then. Shathrai, you investigate the matter. I am going inside to talk to my trusted Rajbaa."

Rana stepped in the passage, suddenly the pavement caved in with crashing sound, Buddhidhan held him firmly. Rana

Bhupsinh was saved. Suddenly they saw a secret path opening up under the ground, standing there was Jamal with a lantern and Rana's bodyguard with sword. Shathrai slumped in a chair, "Jamal!... Alive?... Whose hand behind all these?"

In fact Narbheram instigated Dushtarai to have good time with Kalavati... even in the palace. Assuring him to send Kalavati to his home once her performances were over, Dushtarai on reaching home discovered his wife and sister merrymaking with one of his helper Merulo. Fight followed, Dushtarai was stabbed and Merulo ran to the court to ask for mercy and confessed, "The order to build underground tunnel came from Shathrai." Now Rana was convinced of the integrity of Buddhidhan. Buddhidhan advised Rana to keep Shathrai and his brother Karvatrai under house arrest till investigations were over. Rana announced strictest punishment to Kalavati, "Drag her to the jail..."

Navinchandra, after the courtroom drama, was going back home unmindfully. Life was never easy for him since the death of his mother. Laxminandan remarried to Guman who was a jealous women. She felt jealous of her stepson Saraswatichandra when he passed out M.A.L.L.B. She was concerned with her own son Dhananandan. Her envy knew no bounds when Saraswatichandra was betrothed to Kumudsundari, the daughter of Vidyachatur of Ratnanagar. Vidyachatur had frequented their house whenever he came to Bombay and had closely observed Saraswatichandra growing into a handsome, cultured and highly educated man. He proposed engagement with his daughter. Laxminandan was happy and so was the grand mother who had actually looked after Saraswatichandra since his childhood.

The memory of Kumud came to his mind when he received the first letter from her. He could open it only after his best friend Chandrakant had left.

"My Chandra,

I cannot think of what to write but is doing so compelled by my soul. Through this letter I feel I am meeting you in person... you may laugh at my worthless writing! You are "Chandra", the moon... up above in the sky and yet to nurture

this "Kumud"... the lotus... lying on earth is considered your duty, I know not what else to write."

May I have one of your photographs?

My heart has dictated this letter and you are the inspiration behind it... what further do I write.

Yours

Kumud"

He wrote a reply, immediately.

"Dear lovely Kumud,

The moon that does not grow with lotus belong to the same soil, subjected to similar feelings...

My friend Chandrakant knows me as one with impregnable heart. Your short letter has turned it so vulnerable... I cannot help but pen this letter immediately, my greedy heart insists for quick reply from you...

Is this the love, people talk about? I am not only sending my snap, am coming over there to see you personally...

Now yours only

Saraswatichandra"

Saraswatichandra visited in-laws who gave him rousing welcome. He, mightily impressed Vidyachatur, Gunasundari, sister-in-law Kusum and even grandfather Manchatur. Tongue-tied Kumud forgot to take permission of her mother to meet him and yet slipped into his room hiding behind the door, starring at his back.

Impulsively he turned, stared and, lost in the figure so beautiful and delicate. The moment was frozen. He broke the silence, "Here are my books for you"... Their fingers touched... and shivered. In no time they were lost in talk. The wedding was fixed for next summer but...

Guman turned green when Saraswatichandra got an expensive ring for Kumud, hanged her huge portrait in his room.

She started stuffing Laxminandan's ears with all sorts of nonsense. He discovered his dead mother had willed her wealth to her grand son without consulting her own son, his anger flared up. Not only he blamed selfish designs of his in law's interference but also dragged Kumud's name in it. That lost his self-restraint; Saraswatichandra went to Chandrakant, reported every thing to him and conveyed his firm decision to give up all his wealth and leave the house. Heated arguments between the two continued, Chandrakant warned, "Saraswati, You will never rest in peace if you harmed Kumudsundari."

Next morning Saraswatichandra left after a letter to Vidyachatur calling off his betrothal with Kumudsundari and another one for Chandrakant. Laxminandan repented; spent plenty of money to find his dear son.

Once Chandrakant got a lead that Saraswati lived at Suvarnapur under new name "Navinchandra". He went first to Vidyachatur to get an introductory note for Buddhidhan.

Vidyachatur's family blamed Saraswatichandra for his wrong decisions, when Chandrakant told them of the family quarrels. Kusum squarely defended his action under prevalent circumstances. Chandrakant felt she was a better choice for Saraswatichandra, who could control him. Kusum was extremely angry against her parents when they proposed her name for Saraswatichandra. She wrote long report for her sister and gave the letter to Chandrakant to deliver personally to Kumud.

Buddhidhan reached home to share the events of the court with his wife Saubhagyadevi, who was eagerly waiting. "Devi, at last we have achieved all our dreams." While talking to her his loving eyes noted the signs of early pregnancy in his wife. Saubhagyadevi was uneasy, she told her husband shyly, "Let us treat this home as a forest... and we observe duties of Vaanprasth... let the Grihasthashram be left to the younger generation." The outstanding husband respected her wish.

Pramaddhan in his room was watching his reflection in a mirror, gloating over raise in his allowances, "Part of it for Padma, perfumes, cloths..." His thoughts were interrupted on hearing some movements next door. Krishnakalika opened the

chain of Navinchandra's door. Kumudsundari had noticed her entry in Navin's room. She went after her and caught her red handed. She allowed her to go away but not before giving last warning to her, "Do not ever enter here again if you love your life." She warned her guilty faced husband, "Don't you know she is a double agent of Shathrai, who reported to him about the secret meeting between Rana and my father-in-law?" She broke down, thinking, "The learned one left me before marriage, this uneducated is giving me up after marriage." After a while Pramaddhan left the room.

Buddhidhan was making arrangements to receive Chandrakant. When Navinchandra reached home and learnt about Chandrakant's arrival he offered his services to receive him at Rajeshwar but Buddhidhan had already made another arrangement Navinchandra went to his room, lied on his bed, worrying about what was in the store for him when Chandrakant would declare his real identity.

Kumud, in her room was storming through emotional upheaval. "The person she loved she could not even talk... why did he leave me? This one is not Navinchandra...!" She looked at their connecting door, gripped by the intense desire was pulled by unknown power towards the door... raised her hand to open the door, a shadow flickered, a hand as if was preventing her... "Was that my mother Gunial...? What the hell was I doing? How could I have gone to him?"

She ran back to her bed, crying, after a while took out Saraswati's letters which she had hidden in her cupboard and compared the handwriting which he had dropped from his pocket which she had found accidentally. Once her nerves calm down she started writing a letter to Saraswatichandra.

"My own but now alienated,

I have no right to speak to you hence the heart has found it's own ways of expression. Listen to this last prayer if your heart bleeds the way mine does...

Who can say how cruel will he be, except the cruel one himself? The sufferer will endure but how long? It is in your hands."

She quietly entered the next room, found him asleep, slipped her letter in his pocket throwing the last glance at the figure, saw a letter lying on his bare chest, reorganised the handwritings, "This is Saraswatichandra" and with that thought, she fainted. Saraswati immediately picked her up, mumbling in utter confusion, "Please do wake up, what will others think of us?"

She regained her consciousness and stood up, after a while she gained her strength and started telling Saraswatichandra, "My right to speak to you has been taken away by you. My letter is lying in your pocket, which will tell you everything. Please go back to Bombay..."

You may fly like a kite or as a wing... unconcerned, who can prevent you but me sitting on the burning pyre, alive! Can I run away? Scorched and burnt, may cry or die seeing the heart indestructible like *Vajra*, bursting into pieces... does it matter...! Your freedom is intact..."

She ran to her room, once again took out all his letters, read, reread even memorised, then burnt them all, filled a bottle, labelled it as HEART SCORCHING ASH' and kept it where she could see it...

Next morning Saraswatichandra left the house, taking their leave, sending his last glance at Kumud with heavy heart.

The area from where his cart was passing was lying in the middle of Suvarnapur, Ratnanagar and Manoharpuri. The thick jungle on one side and sea at other while the third side had the mountains of Sundargiri, which provided very good cover to bandits though protected by soldiers of the three states.

Vidyachatur and Gunsundari belonged to Manoharpuri and were betrothed since their childhood. Vidyachatur had his college education in Bombay. On his return he was placed as a teacher for English, in the family of king Maniraj of Ratnanagar. Thus his family life began when Gunsundari joined his large family at Ratnanagar. Vidyachatur with the advent of time rose to power and maintained good balance between the king Aniraj, British agency's officers and the neighbouring states. At home

educated and cultured Gunsundari looked after all sorts of family problems and was respected, loved and cared by her husband as well as Manchatur, her father-in-law and the rest of the family.

Gunsundari and Vidyachatur had raised their two daughters, Kumudsundari and Kusumsundari very well with all round education with good amount of freedom.

Since marriage of Kumudsundari, her mother wanted to go for pilgrimage to Bhadreshwar. She had asked Kumud also to join her at Manoharpuri where her father-in-law was staying for quite some time. Chandrakant had left for Suvarnapur with the note for Buddhidhan. All the route of these three travellers passed through this jungle. Saraswatichandra and Chandrakant were attacked by different groups of bandits at different places. Saraswatichandra was lying unconscious when monks of Sundargiri saw him and took him to their monastery at Yadushrung.

When Buddhidhan heard about amorous affairs of his son he was angry and had announced that he would punish the son on his return. Pramaddhan when came home picked up raw with Kumud on finding some pieces of letters and on advice of Krishnakalika threw out Kumud from home. Kumud sent a note to her mother saying she was reaching Manoharpuri next morning. Unaware of what went on between her and Pramaddhan, the family bid her farewell and wishing her early return. Her friend Vanlila too had come to say goodbye and passed on a note to Kumud, which she pushed under her blouse and her cart moved away along with few bodyguards.

At Manoharpuri, Gunsundari was worried about her daughter Kumud, Manchatur decided to meet Kumud with some of his horsemen. He did meet Kumud's cart in the jungle and sent message home that all was well. They travelled to some distance when outlaws attacked but were thwarted by competent horsemen of Buddhidhan and Manchatur. By that time it was early morning and taking guard's permission Kumud went to the bank of river Subhdra. She was too preoccupied with all the recent happenings, when a bandit pushed her in the river

and before any one could save her the fast currents engulfed her.

Thus in the same jungle, saints took Saraswatichandra away and the river carried Kumud away. Every one broke down in Vidyachatur's family. When they found the note of Vanlila giving details about affairs between Krishnakalika and Pramaddhan, they thought Kumud committed suicide.

Some lady worshipers of Goddess Amba had their temple in the valley of Sundargiri where the river Subhadra merged in the sea. That is where some mendicants spotted inert body floating in waters. They rescued her, treated her to normal health. Kumud confided in the chief of mendicants with her life story. Their advice to Kumud was remarriage with Saraswatichandra whom she loved so much. Just then a saint reported about a man named Navinchandra who was given shelter at Yadushrung monastery and Kumud's heart leaped with joy.

Saraswatichandra found back his inner peace in the tranquillity of Yadushrung and the company of learned saints. Often the memories of Kumud flashed a feeling of guilt in him. He also had come to know that Chandrakant was still at Ratnanagar and with the help of a monk he sent message for him to come over to Yadushrung. Suddenly his eyes were directed towards the noise and laughter of mendicants who were visiting the monastery, he felt Kumud was among them.

The chief of the lady worshipers and the Guru of the monastery decided meeting of Saraswatichandra and Kumud in the seclusion before Saraswatichandra adopted sainthood formally.

They met and talked. Saraswati admitted, "I did come to Ratnanagar to meet you incognito but had taken sea route and reached there late. You were already married to Pramaddhan." Kumud's heart was relieved of its burden. Saraswati also explained about his decision to carry out *Gram Vikas Yojana*, where he will need her help. Kumud agreed, "... I am the earth and will look at you as my sky." When Saraswati informed about death of her husband, who had committed suicide due to the anger that followed when Buddhidhan returned from the court.

She was disturbed by one more of her misfortunes, later regained her self-control. They had lengthy discussion on their social welfare programme and Saraswati, ultimately told Kumud, "This is our pilgrimage, and you will be there at every step that I take and I will be behind you."

Vidyachatur and Kumud had another problem. Saubhagyadevi died after the birth of a son. Buddhidhan's daughter and his advisor requested them to consider Kusum for the place. Kusum overheard their talk and was so upset that she decided never to marry at all through her life. She also started giving up pleasures and took to simple life... Buddhidhan had also sent a letter to them stating in no uncertain words that he had no intention of remarriage. Vidyachatur thought Saraswatichandra a better candidate, even Chandrakant felt it too.

On receiving message of Saraswati through a monk that he and Kumud were alive and wanted Chandrakant to visit him, he went to Yadushrung. On meeting his friend, Chandrakant poured out his anger on him for his irresponsible behaviour.

When he cooled down Saraswati put forward his plan for social work project that included Kumud too. Chandrakant gave his clear opinion against Kumud's involvement because society would neither accept a widow, working with him nor his marriage with a widow. He suggested Kusum as a practical and suitable choice. Saraswatichandra rejected Chandrakant's suggestion while Kumud was all for it. Saraswatichandra left the decision to Kumudsundari. Chandrakant also gave the news that Kumud's family too was coming to Sundargiri.

The family reunion of Kumud too was over with the feeling that their daughter was alive. Kumud convinced Kusum to have at least a frank talk with Saraswatichandra, as far as she was concerned she was satisfied if the two were happy with each other.

The marriage of Kusumsundari and Saraswatichandra was conducted in accordance with monk's rituals wearing patched garments. The parents of Saraswatichandra also attended the simple ceremony. The newly weds went back to Bombay.

Kumud told her sister while blessing her, "Kusum, I have given the precious gem of mine. Do take utmost care of him." To Saraswati she said, "O! My great man! Do pardon me to tie you up with this social responsibility. Do continue with your project. I will mingle like Yamuna in your flowing Ganga."

GUJARATNO NAATH

(THE RULER OF GUJARAT)

Kanaiyalal Munshi

(1897-1971)

(Year of publication - 1917)

KANAIYALAL MUNSHI was a literati of the highest cadre, leading political leader, helped in developing the constitution of India and Indian culture. He established branches of Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan in India and abroad. He brought artistic touch to historical novels. He wrote diversely in the field of social, historical, mythological and political fictions, essays, biography, and sketches of great Gurjars and carved his name among the top writers. His three novels *Patanni Prabhuta*, *Gujaratno Naath*, and *Rajadhiraj* are based on the history of Gujarat and *Gujaratno Naath* has reached excellence in the fiction world. Almost all his works are translated in Hindi.

About the Story :

'Gujaratno Nath' is the novel, which earned laurels for Munshi. Munshi as a writer became prominently known with this book. This is a historical novel, which became popular among readers, in fact one can say that with this fiction he established a style of historical fiction writing. Here incidents move so fast that reader is drawn in the current unknowingly. He has masterfully used vivid colours to paint different characters, which reflect numerous strains of different inter play through out the story. He has personified romance within various shades through characters like Minal-Munjhal, Krishnadev-Ranak, Kak-Manjari and others. The comedy is created through Krishnadev and Gajanan. Kirtidev's search for his family roots carries him through different kinds of adventure. Chivalry is established with the character of Kak. The story begins with Kak entering Patan from the river Saraswati and leaves at the end of the story from the same route. As evident in the literature of the Middle era, Munshi too uses incidents like woman displaying valour dressed in men's garb, enemies put behind bars and the way they escape, the way intrigues raise laughter and create confusion among enemy with contradictory messages etc. Although this is a historical novel, the author has interwoven with contemporary times.

GUJARATNO NAATH

Hundreds of people were at the river bank on a cold wintry night running away from enemy attacks and were gathered on the bank of the river Saraswati. Across the river, gates of the Patan Fort were closed for the night. Krishnadev, a disgruntled youth was sitting by a fire to warm himself. A man jumped down from his camel and introduced himself as Kak. He asked Krishnadev, "I need a boat to cross the river." "No boat will be available at this time of the night." "I must go inside the fort, its urgent." "Then jump into the river." "Don't you joke with me! I have a message from chief of Laat, Tribhuvanpal for the king of Patan. Malwa has invaded Gujarat and Tribhuvanpal is on his way to prevent the army progressing towards Patan." "Now you can't cross the river tonight so it is best that you sleep here tonight." Kak had noticed two strangers listening to their talks. Much before dawn he saw the two men get into a boat and crossed the river. Kak jumped in the river and confronted them. To his chagrin he learnt that the two were none others but the king Jayadevsinh Solanki and his chief minister Munjal. Munjal told Kak, "You keep this meeting a secret, and meet us tomorrow in the morning at the palace. Now you go back to your friend and sleep there."

Kak and Krishnadev reached Patan and parted. Kak met Vishaldev, who took him to Sajjanmantri's palatial residence. Here he met Krishnadev again and he was curious about who the man and what was his motive. Kak was taken to Rajgad.

Jaydev, his mother and Munjal had been to the pilgrimage of Somnaath temple, leaving the administration of Patan in the hands of Shantu Mantri. When he learnt that Ubak, the chief commander of Malwa was progressing towards Patan he went to negotiate for peace. The Rajput king of Patan disapproved of this and was having serious consultations with his ministers.

Munjal pacified his anger saying. "Where do we have an army as big as theirs?"

Patan was in a fix. Udayan Mehta, ruled Karnawati and Sambhatirtha (Ahmedabad and Khambhat) and was becoming stronger. In order to curb him Munjal took away Karnawati from him. There was a danger that this happens; crafty baniya chief might join Ubak rather than Patan. On the other hand Junagadh's Ra'Navghan was defeated but he too could spell trouble for Patan.

When Kak was allowed to enter the stateroom, he was surprised to see Deshal, the brother of Vishal who was playing double role as an informer for Ubak. Munjal asked Deshal to leave immediately after lunch at Rajgadh and defend the kingdom with his trusted troops. Thus he gave no time to Deshal to manipulate. Deshal was stumped, and Kak understood the perfect manoeuvring of Munjal. Kak was directed to meet Tribhuvanpal and ask him to reach Bhogapur instead of coming over to Patan and take Ubak at that end.

Kak was leaving for Sajjan's house when Jaydevsinh called him. Jaydev first confronted him, "Last night you were gossiping." "No my Lord, whatever I said was fact." "That means I am king only on paper." "I must have freedom of expression, then only I can advice somebody." Once convinced of Kak's loyalty, Jaydev expressed his frustration of being under the thumb of his uncle Munjal and asked for his advice. "The day you loose Munjal, you will loose Patan." "Then what do I do? Shantu had done treaty with Malwa; Uda has spoiled my name. I want to punish them without damaging my prestige." Kak said, "The real fear is from Ra of Junagadh and Udo of Khambhat, the two must not join hands against us and Deshal too is to be prevented from playing his double role. Mandaleshwar Tribhuvanpal can go with his troops to Viramgam and win Junagadh, you too join them. I will first reach Karnawati to deliver the message to Tribhuvanpal then go to Khambhat to teach a lesson to that crafty Jain minister Udo." Jaydev is impressed by this advice from Kak but suddenly Munjal came in and Kak hid behind in a loft. Munjal while informally talking to his nephew understood that Jaydev has found a good advisor but who can that be?

Tribhuvanpal's wife Kashmiradevi called Kak. He conveyed Tribhuvanpal's message to her just then Munjal reached there. He asked Kak, "Did you advice Jaydev that Tribhuvan should go to Viramgam instead of Bhojpur?" Kak's evasive reply was, "You are probably aware that Ra Navghan is preparing to attack Gujarat?" "Yes and I am also aware that he has sent a secret agent here who is staying with you at Sajjan's Haveli." His advice to Kak was, "We will remain here, you inform Trbhuvanpal to reach Nalkantha, it will be easier to tackle Ra there than at Viramgam."

Kak reached Sajjansinh's Haveli and found Krishnadev was not there. Vishal too was searching for him, he had important message for him. Kak's suspicion about the connection between Deshal and Vishal was established then.

When Kak was at Rajgadh, Krishnadev was in the back-yard of Sajjan's Haveli, hiding behind a tree and watching a young beauty having her bath. She was Som, the daughter of Sajjan. Krishnadev and Som fell in love at first sight.

Kak came to know that Deshal had already left for Madhopur as per Munjal's orders. Vishal, followed him but stopped first at Bhimanaath, spoke to a man whose face was masked. Kak way laid him with sweet talks and offered him *Bhang*(opium). Vishal was too drunk to go so he confided in Kak, "Go to the Nilkantheshwar Mahadev near the border of Madhopur and tell Deshal 'Maha vad Barash, Panchaleshwar ni jay.' (On the twelfth day of dark half of the lunar month of Maha, May the lord of Panchal be victorious), Kak, this is extremely important message and I trust you with it." Kak assured him and left for Madhopur. Now Kak saw clearly that supporters of Ra are meeting at Panchaleswar to workout their strategy, informed about this to Jaydev first and then finding Deshal at Madhopur gave false message, "Fagan sud chauth, Panchaleshwar ni Jay" (Fourth day of bright half of the lunar month of Fagan).

After this masterly stroke, Kak gave all the message to Tribhuvanpalsinh including the one he delivered for Deshal and left for Khambhat. On reaching its border he saw the burnt houses of yavans tortured by Jain community. He protected a

Yavan, Khatib from this attack and took him along to Damusheth where they spent the night. There he also came to know about conversion of their son to Jainism much against the parent's wish. Kak promised them that he will save their child.

Udayan Mehta learned about the arrival of a brahmin, from Patan, invited him immediately to his palace and put him under house arrest asking trusted Tilak to keep close watch over him.

Kak manages to escape and speak to the child who is going to be converted to Jainism, but he disagree to go back to his parents. While coming to the monastery he overheard conversation between a mother who was persuading her daughter to marry a Jain baron or face the consequences and adopt Jainism. The proud brahmin daughter refused and the mother left the cell. Kak rescued her and left Khambhat for Karnawati by boat. Kak was drawn towards this proud, brave, intelligent scholar named Manjari who was the daughter of a renowned scholar and poet, late Rudradatta. Her uncle Gajanan Pandit stayed at Patan so he promised her to reach there. Kak made arrangements for her to stay at Dadak, an appointed minister of Karnawati while he attended his other job.

Then Kak left for Pancheswar with fifty horsemen provided by Dadak. On his way he learnt that Ra had left for Jasdan so he asked few of his soldiers to follow him. He took another route and met Tribhuvanpal who said, "On starting from Karnawati I realised that Ra was already at Panchal since few days. I attacked Panchal but Ra had run away and so I was following him." "Then he is not very far." Together they started towards Jasdan. They noticed Ra alone speeding away. They too increased their speed but Tribhuvanpal's horse slipped and fell in a ditch. Kak went ahead and noticed Jaydev's army. The army was under the command of Parshuram; the eldest son of Sajjan. Kak was surprised when Parshuram did not believe him and ordered his soldiers to tie Ra and him on camels and left. Kak was upset, out of nowhere Kashmiradevi reached the scene attired as a soldier and ordered Kak's release and then after locating Tribhuvanpal, they went to Panchal.

Parshuram was angry that one of his prisoners had run away, on the other hand Jaysinhadev was upset that he was late

in catching Ra, besides Uda Mehta added to his misunderstanding about Kak that he had created communal riots at Khambhat.

When Parshuram saw Kak with Tribhuvanpal, he took Kak again as a prisoner following Jaydev's orders. Kak was disturbed by the twists of Uda. Parshuram asked for their pardon and instead of taking Kak as a prisoner he kept him under surveillance. Parshuram reviewing the events said, "When I reached Panchal, Munjal uncle also had reached there. Ra lost and surrendered. He was released after agreement to pay big money to Patan." They all left for Patan. Shantu Mehta will bring Ubak to Patan who accepted the ransom for peace.

Patan was decked up for celebrations today, not only to celebrate Holi festival - but to welcome Malwa's commander, Ubak. All the dignitaries of Patan except Munjal were at the bank of Saraswati River. Approaching the shore, Ubak's eyes scanned the crowd. After him Shantu Mehta alighted followed by pleasant, smart young man Kirtidev, the son of Ubak. People gave the guests rousing welcome. As the party went in to the temple of Bhimanath, Munjal's elephant arrived, with Tribhuvanpalsinh and Kak. Udo who was standing next to Ubak was shocked seeing Kak there. Tribhuvan had convinced Jaysinhadev of his error in judging Kak and the real culprit was Udayanmantri. But Somehow Udo managed to kidnap Kak from the crowd and was pushed in an underground prison.

Ubak was taken to the royal court and he was to be presented before the king Jaysinhadev, where after formal introductions, he put forward two proposals from the emperor of Malwa. His daughter was offered in marriage to Jaydev and an invitation for the royalty to visit Avanti. Jaydev who was bit depressed with this visit of Ubak as if he represented the victorious side, felt elated at this marriage proposal, but before he would blunder in to some commitments, Munjal said firmly, "Maharaja will give his reply on this 'poonam', (the full moon night) when the Rajyasabha is meeting."

Munjal felt little uneasy watching a stranger, an young man with Ubak. His fair, innocent looking face suddenly evoked the memory of his dead wife Phoolkunvar and his son who could be of this stranger's age had he been alive. Munjal rubbed his

forehead thinking, "Now to Munjal his son is Patan... This Kirtidev has to be followed... where is Kak?" He failed to trace him, so he went to visit Minal Devi. He saw a beautiful stranger girl with Pandit Gajanan's wife Matra. "She is Manjari, the daughter of royal poet late Rudradatta. Tribhuvan's Bhat kidnapped her and brought her over here." When they left, Munjal and Minal Devi discussed about Ubak's visit. Munjal said, "Jaydev's mouth was watering when he heard about the proposal for the daughter of Laxmivarma, hope he does not act silly! First of all Laxmivarma has no children, this can be his brother Yashovarma's daughter. Besides, marriage with her will mean bringing in enemy within the home." Munjal also warned about sweet tounge Udo who was in town and had managed to win Jaydev's confidence. He requested Minal Devi, giving her intimate smile, the only sign left of their deep love of bygone era, to keep eye on her son. As the two were talking about various things Minal Devi said, "Munjal, Kashmira has taken pledge to get you married." "Why me?" "Munjal think about it seriously... what will happen to you after I die?" He looked up, "The supporter of the unsupported ones will take my care," and he left.

Kashmiradevi had also planned wedding for Kak and Manjari. Manjari was scared since Uda had noticed her presence in Patan. Kashmiradevi decided to take her to her palace where she will be more protected. Kashmiradevi asked Pandit Gajanan to find a suitable match for Munjal and he suggested a name. She told him that she had not seen the girl and would like to see her personally.

Tribhuvan when learnt that his Bhat was missing, he went straight to Jaydev, and confronted him. The two got in to heated arguments. Tribhuvan lost his cool and almost attacked him. Jaydev got scared and called for his aid Dungar. When Dungar entered the scene he stood away from them, Jaydev shouted at him "Catch him, why aren't you listening to me?" Dungar bowed down his head and said, "My lord, how can I? He is my master." Tribhuvan left the place. Jaydev found the humiliation too much to contain his tears. He was worried that the whole of Patan will know about this in no time. He ran after Tribhuvan and ordered Dungar to bring Kak to him.

When the two saw Munjal, he packed off Tribhuvan to meet Minal Devi, and took Kak into an adjacent room. "Were you rolling in dust? Look at your clothes? Does not matter, now that once again you are in good books with Jaydev." Kak marvelled at this shrewd diplomat who quickly found all the missing links. Munjal asked Kak confidentially to watch Kirtidev and find out the purpose of his visit to Patan.

Kak replied, "I think he wants strong support for Malwa in Patan." "Kak, no one is sure about it and you talk with certainty. Bravo! I am not worried about Ubak but more so of that dangerous kid, Kirtidev." Kak accepted the work assigned to him and left. Munjal called one of his helper, Bihari and asked him to follow Kak and report his where about three to four times a day.

Kak was fast asleep at Tribhuvan's palace. Suddenly voice of two ladies woke him up. Kashmira was trying to persuade Manjari to marry and her answer was, "they all are dwarfs." "Are you mad? There are so many brave eligible ones in Patan!" "Baa, I am not a Brahmin of Patan but I belong to the era of greatest scholars when Sati like Ansuya wanted to hide Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh in her lap." "But how long do you want to run around?" "Yes, I know if that chivalrous Kak had not helped me to escape from the prison I would have been dead by now. I am beautiful and those infatuated slaves run after me. So whom do I marry?" Ultimately the discussion led to the name of Kak. "What? I should marry that loitering Bhat from Laat! An owl that has never seen sunrays, or their power, would that make him far-sighted? Baa, one cannot achieve greatness just by acquiring position, money or bravery." "So you think Kak is neither pure nor cultured?" Poor Kak's eavesdropping; shattered his dream. "You are right but Manjari one day you will see I am made of what mettle."

Ubak, after meeting Jaysinhadev met Sajjan mantri who is one of his old friends. Sajjan had given an infant in adoption to Ubak some twenty years ago. Ubak told him, "Kirtidev has brought glory to me but now he wants to know about his family." "Ubak, there is nothing to worry at all about his real parents, just why not leave it at that. He may stay with me if

he wants to stay after you are gone." Kirtidev decides to stay back.

Kak comes down to Sajjan, meets Krishnadev and Kirtidev too. While talking about Patan Kirtidev said, "To me Avanti and Patan are like two eyes of Aryavarta." "Yes but they do not see in one line" was the caustic reply from Krishnadev. "Now that the treaty will be formalised, God willing it will have long life. What do you say Kak Bhat?" "I do not think so, Patan never likes to stop fighting." "I do not say that. I am in favour of war, not against Avanti, but side by side with her." Krishnadev's retort was, "Not in this era." "Don't you realise the ocean of Yavans is progressing towards us! None understands the graveness of the situation except Kashmir raaj." Kak appreciated his anxiety, "That is why you want Avanti and Patan to come closer!" "Yes, Aryavarta can be saved only if Patan, Malwa, Kanoj, Chittod, and Sapadlaksha (region around Ajmer) are united. Then only they can help Kashmir Madradesh." "Are the Yavans that powerful?" "More so than the storms that blow on the dooms day," Kirtidev asked Kak, Krishnadev and even Sajjan's help in converting Munjal and Jaidev to his ideology.

Kak is mightily impressed by Kirtidev's philosophy. On reaching Tribhuvan's palace he hears screams of Manjari, kidnappers were running away with her. Kak follows them to a great distance, Kirtidev too joins in, ultimately the kidnappers drop Manjari and leave the scene. Manjari is unconscious. Kak brings back Manjari in the safety of Tribhuvan's palace and goes back to Kirtidev who wanted some help from Kak. Kirtidev manages to rope in Kak in his pursuit of finding his family tree and extracts a promise from him to get the final verdict from a *Tantrik* on fourteenth day of the dark fortnight.

Kashmiradevi, was planning already for early wedding of Manjari with Kak, and had invited Gajanan pandit to decide on auspicious date at the earliest, that is when Kak reached there. The astrologer Gajanan approved of Kak as a good candidate for Manjari after reading his horoscope. The wedding day was fixed, Kak was asked to be ready in case the day is shifted earlier. Kak's happiness reached seventh heaven. Manjari's face too turned red. Kashmiradevi warned her, "Have you forgotten that

fellow from Khambhat?" and then left the room leaving the two. Manjari's face looked stern, looking at Kak with hatred she said, "Why are you burning me?" "Me! Burning you?" "Yes, all of you, because I am an orphan, that Ravan of Khambhat is after me, and now you want to marry me... are't you ashamed of all these?" "If you think that I am a tyrant then I do not want to marry you." "Why do you refuse? You saved me twice, Baa says you have right over me." "I know I am not worthy of you, you are highly educated, I am absolutely uneducated, and you are cultured I am not. I don't have any right on you but I am your servant." "If so, then why marry me?" "For your sake. Don't you realise the danger that lurks behind you? Don't you know that you will not be safe in Junagadh with your grandfather?" "Kashmira Baa feels that once I am married he will leave me alone because to him his prestige is more important, so except marriage I have no safety... since you have saved me I will respect you for all my life but if you marry against my wish...!" Kak sighs, "Manjari, I never knew I am so hated?... There is another way, you give me the name of that rogue, I will kill him, and then you don't have to marry me." When he heard the name of Udayan mantri, he said scornfully, "Then only two alternatives are left for you, either marry me or that Jain mantri." She cries then adds, "Kak, you have done many obligations, please do not add any more, after marrying me leave me at my grandpa in Junagadh." The world swam before him; for long he stared at her, he despaired barren and after a while left.

He went and met Uda and after convincing him how precious their friendship was in present times, he came down to the purpose of his visit. "I have come to ask for a promise from you, if you give that then I will remain your servant for the life time and if I am refused then I will be a die hard enemy for you." Uda asked with a sweet smile, "First why don't you tell me what promise you want?" "Give up your trail behind the daughter of late Rudradatta?" Not a line flickered on Uda's face, "Where is she?" "She was at Khambhat, and you wanted to marry her." Cunningly Udo refused, Kak left in anger.

Kak reaches Jaydev and the two make certain impressive changes in the opening ceremony of Rajyasabha that is meeting

next day. Suddenly arrives unannounced Minal Devi and Jaydev asks Kak to hide somewhere. Jaydev was still afraid of his mother. Minal Devi asked him, "What have you decided about Malwa's proposal?" "Baa, what is the sense in asking again and again. I want to accept the proposal. This is what I do not like, you want me to manage the kingdom so does Munjal uncle, but you two always interfere in decision making." "To me you are always my young child. Many things you are not aware of, Ubak has come for the treaty with Malwa." "That we are going to refuse." "Yes, but if their girl comes here then there will be two parties not just in Patan but also in Rajgadh. Your two queens belong to an inferior royalties and this one will be from higher one..." Jaydev surrenders to his mother. Jaydev recalls Kak and tells him that he has decided to reject the Malwa's proposal, then asked Kak to deliver his message to Devada of Kaldi, then requests him, "Pass on this packet of Gulal (red powder) to a girl Ranak Devi. This is not ordinary colour but is my marriage proposal."

As Kak was going to meet Devada, Krishnadev meets him and warns him that some people were after him. Kak passes on the job to send the packet of Gulal on behalf of the king to Ranak, which Krishnadev accomplishes not without impressing the girl with his charm.

Next day Rajyasabha meets in great splendour, all were impressed. Even Munjal noted the difference and was happy when the king of Patan announced amnesty to the troubled people of Kaldi and gives five villages for the rehabilitation of war torn Kaldi. Special awards were given to the victorious soldiers. Then the king Jaydev made his far-reaching announcement, "I want to bring justice to my people of Khambhat. I have learnt that the people torture poor Malechha community of Khambhat." On Jaydev's order Khatib is brought in the hall. Udayan mantri, the most powerful man of Khambhat, shivered, "I never dreamt Khambhat was misruled. I want my people to live in peace in my kingdom" Khatib was given some clothes and money and the people of Khambhat were asked to bear the expenses of rehabilitating the Malechha community. On prompting from Munjal Jaydev also announced special promotion for Kak. Jaydev pompously turned to Ubak, "We are honoured by the

arrival of a great warrior, I do want to come to Avanti but it is not possible at present so please pardon us..." Ubak's sharp eyes became sharper. "What about the proposal?" "Does not seem to be feasible when you are at the border of Patan but may be some day when we are at the border of Avanti I may marry your princess." The Rajyasabha ended sine die. Munjal's comment to Kak was, "This one will turn much greater Maharaja then his forefathers."

Kak and Manjari are married. On their first night Manjari reminds Kak of his promise to drop her at her grandfather's place in Junagadh.

Kirtidev meets Munjal and tells him firmly, "If Patan wants a war then do you think Avanti will abstain from it? Today Aryavarta needs one diplomat of your calibre and no fights amongst kings. We want to unite all to drive out the Yavan's invasion. Have you forgotten the black deeds of Mohammed Gazani? Yesterday your king gave special uniform to sinful one." Munjal puts him off saying that his scheme was not possible to implement at present. Kirtidev was to address meeting of his followers from Patan at the place near the back garden of Sajjan. He was pushed into a distant prison cell in a well.

Many attend the meeting including Kak, Manjari, Tribhuvan, and even Munjal secretly attired. Krishnadev takes over the position in absence of Kirtidev. He announces move to unite with Malwa to solidify Aryavarta even if its councillors disagreed. The group had devided opinion when civil defiance was suggested against Munjal. The meeting broke when fight started and in the scuffle Kak realised that Manjari was not there. Udo who was there had successfully removed Manjari and hidden her in a cell under the well not realising that Kirtidev too was imprisoned there.

Munjal while in the back garden of Sajjan's Haveli gets lost in ruminating his own past. His marriage with Phoolkunwar, the sister of Sajjan, those difficult days when he was struggling for power, his association and platonic love for Minal Devi and disastrous end of his family life. His wife left him to live with her brother taking away the infant child but after few days the

two were declared dead. "I became an instrument to satisfy the greed of greedy ones... As long as am alive I will be living this type of life." He was standing at a place after twenty years. Suddenly Munjal overhears desperate conversations between a beautiful girl and Krishnadev who wants to run away with her.

When Krishnadev reveals his identity as Khengar, the son of Ra, she refuses to run away with the enemy's son. Munjal intervenes and drives him away.

Kak, after long struggle traces Manjari who wanted that her co-prisoner Kirtidev too, must be helped to get out. Kirtidev requests Kak to go to find out the name of his father as it was fourteenth night of the dark lunar fortnight and Kak leaves to meet the *tantrik*.

On the other hand, suspicious Munjal goes after Kak, reaches the prison cell where Kirtidev is. Munjal almost would have killed him but for the timely arrival of Kak who announced that Munjal was the real father of Kirtidev. Then after as per his promise Kak leaves Manjari to her grand father at Junagadh. Ra Navghan dies leaving the kingdom to his youngest son Khengar. When Khengar meets Kak in Junagadh, he puts him behind bars. Lonely Manjari sheds tears of separation from her husband whom she realises that she loved immensely. She helps Kak to escape from the prison. The two lovelorn souls reunited in the jungle on the way to Patan.

At Patan, lonely Munjal rejects matchmaking of Kashmiradevi and Minal Devi with Som who ultimately dies of fatal injury from Krishnadev.

Munjal is standing on the bank of river Saraswati. His son Kirtidev leaves for Avanti by boat.

BHARELO AGNI

(LATENT FIRE)

Ramanlal V. Desai

(1842-1954)

(Year of publication 1935)

RAMANLAL V. DESAI (1842-1954) was born in a respected Nagar family, of Petlad, a village of Charotar region from Gujarat. After higher education he joined judicial department in Baroda state. While working he also tracked successfully, into the various areas of literature, like short stories, fictions, dramas, essays, philosophy, autobiography etc. The leading critics have complemented him as landmark personality of the era because life size reflections of contemporary period are portrayed. His fictions have different backgrounds, like social, historical and mythological. His creations were very popular with young readers, because they found their own reflections in his work. His *Bharelo Agni* is drawn from the period of revolution of 1857 and is first of its kind among Gujarati literature. His other well-known stories are, *Divya Chakshu*, *Kokila*, *Purnima*, and *Gramlaxmi* etc.

About the Story :

'*Bharelo Agni*' is the first Gujarati novel written on basis of the revolution of 1857. The writer says in the preface, "The revolution of 1857 is extremely important occurrence in the political history of India." It is an eye opener for Hindu, Muslim and British people. The elements leading to the revolution and their failures are used in the story. The writer has created realistic atmosphere. The historical symbols of lotus and roti, contribution of Mangal Pandey, circumstances that triggered the revolution and execution of death penalty on him, are some of the historical events the writer has used. Evolving the character of Mangal the writer has evaluated his contribution in the revolution. Since the novel is written during the Gandhian era, the writer has inadvertently given the touch of non-violence, which indicates tremendous impact of contemporary times even on historical subject. Except this, rest of the events find corroborations in history. The writer has introduced the reader to the impact of the revolution of 1857, by imaginatively dispatching the historical events.

BHARELO AGNI

Rudradatta, the towering personality in his flowing silver hair and beard, appeared more like a hero, taller than his robust self, when a British officer in the village centre was interrogating him. "Where is Gautam?", shouted Peterson. The fearless soldier of yester year, known for his bravery in India and abroad, was now teaching Sanskrit, and propagating Non-violence to his disciples at this Vihar village since twenty years. This was the era before the evolution of 1857, when the Peshwas, Nawabs, Nizams and such powerful rulers of India were absolutely crushed by the British raj. "Hay Bhaman (a slang for Brahamin)! Speak out." "My child, where is he? I have not seen him since last two years." "I will count till twenty five, if you don't reveal his whereabouts then I will shoot you. You have hidden an offender of the British raj." The count down begins, and a disciple, Tryambak, jumps threateningly at the officer. His Guru stops and ordered him to go back to the *pathshala* to take care of Kalyani where the search for Gautam is going on. Obediently Tryambak leaves the scene.

"For God's sake stop all these, Peterson." "Oh Father Johnson! This old man refuses to help us, says he does not know where Gautam is." "Then accept it as fact." Father Johnson had come to the village five years ago to teach these ignorant, orthodox villagers, the principles of Christianity and 'improve' their stock; instead he became an ardent student of Rudradatta to study Sanskrit, Upanishads and Vedas. He took Peterson from the scene to his house.

At night, Rudradatta enters with Gautam, "He was hidden in my *pathshala* and I had no knowledge of it... I am sorry for all the trouble that you had to undergo Mr. Peterson..."

Gautam, Mangal Pandey and Tryambak were once the best disciples of Rudradatta. Two years back Mangal and Gautam

left to join the army without asking Guruji's advice. Peterson had known the two, since they were in the British army fighting against Russia in Turkastan. The two almost won the British award for gallantry but for the unfortunate incident with an assistant officer Jackson. Once Mangal was preparing *Bhang*, (intoxicating drink) an offering for Lord Shiva. Suddenly, intoxicated Jackson with a woman and hard liquor, picked up quarrel with Mangal and touched the Bhang, which ended up in fierce fight. Gautam tried to intervene but not before Jackson was badly injured. Mangal and Gautam were prosecuted and death sentence was declared.

Peterson was aware of the grave consequences if the execution took place in India. They were returning to India on a ship. Hindu religious backlash would be triggered if the two of their war heroes were hanged. A Muslim soldier helped them to escape. Peterson sheds sigh of relief. The two swam cross the sea to reach the shore of Bombay, and took pledge not to rest till the British rule was thrown out of India.

During this period before the revolution, resentment towards the British rule was rising in certain quarters of India. Gautam wanted Guru's blessings. Mangal was afraid lest Rudradatta should convert the both to non-violence, so he remained hidden in jungle surrounding the *ashram* when they reached Vihar village. Gautam had another reason too. He was missing his beloved Kalyani, the grand daughter of Rudradatta. Today when he reached the *pathshala* Kalyani and Tryambak had hidden him in grass pile without the knowledge of their Guru, as they had learnt that the British officer with some of his soldiers might come to catch Gautam.

Peter decided to release Gautam as his was not a serious offence. While returning he saw Tryambak near the church talking to Lucy, the priest's daughter. "Tryambak, why are you not coming to teach me Sanskrit?" "I am too busy these days," was his curt reply. Seeing Lucy's crest fallen face, he added guiltily, "I will come in a day or two." Gautam asked, "Tryambak why did you come here?" "Kalyani sent me over in case that blasted officer turned nasty." Gautam was envious of Tryambak, who was so near to Kalyani and his heart was gripe with intense

jealousy towards Tryambak. "Will the two fall in love, when I am away?"

Rudradatta, Kalyani, Gautam and even Mangal who couldn't leave without blessings of his Guru, spent restless night. The Guru and Mangal went for their early dip in the river, the ardent lover of non-violence advised Mangal, "Be a Parshuram... wipe out the warrior clan from this earth and bring peace to the world. He threw away his axe the moment he accomplished his mission." Mangal swam away shouting behind him; "I may do it too, once my mission is accomplished."

The activists were getting restless, to do something to throw away the shackles of foreign rule. Even some Indian rulers were getting united, collecting arms to overthrow the British rule. A Peshwa ruler sends Tatya Tope, a renowned lawyer and staunch Brahmin, to the Ashram. Rudradatta explained in no uncertain words, "Tatya Tope took liking for brave Tryambak and wanted him to join the revolutionary group, so he put forward his demand to Rudradatta. "You may take him if he is convinced, no one is a prisoner of my ideology in my Ashram." Unfortunately a jealous British soldier attacked Tryambak when he was talking to Lucy alone at night and was wounded. Tatya Tope invited Tryambak to join the revolution when he covered and passed the secret symbol of "Lotus" for the revolution. Gautam too wanted to go but stayed to look after Tryambak.

It was festival time at Bhairawanath temple, on Shivaratri day, the birthday of Lord Shiva. Huge fair was organised and hundreds of new faces had come down to participate in the festivity. There were many activists propagating indiscreetly, the ideology of revolution. A nationalist soldier named Aziz Vallakh Khan passed the word "Lotus" to Tryambak and informed about pardon granted to Mangal and Gautam from the British government. In the fair Rudradatta too meets his long lost friend Mahavir after almost thirty years. The two heroes of yester years chatted at the *pathshala*. Mahavir knew about secret possession of huge pile of weapons hidden by Rudradatta in the mountain range surrounding the village. He demands for the revolution, but Rudradatta turns down his request. That night a secret meeting is held in one of the caves in the mountain and he invites

Rudradatta, Gautam, Tryambak and Kalyani to attend it. Rudradatta's advice was simple, "Do not ignore your duty and religion, it will result in the moral defeat of our revolutions." The meeting decided to start the peaceful revolution on the last day of May of 1857.

Gautam was eager to join revolution. He talks to Kalyani, "I am worried to leave you alone Kalyani. Why don't you marry Tryambak?" Moment those words were uttered Kalyani lost her temper, "How dare you talk like that to me? Tryambak is like my brother. It's you whom I love more than my life." Rudradatta too was aware of the mutual love between his grand daughter and his best disciple and keen to see them married off as early as possible.

Mangal Pandey had joined the 35th regiment. Once during their drill the soldiers were given new bullets covered with protective layer of tallow extracted from flesh of cows and pigs. As a result the deep religious sentiment of Hindus and Muslims was disturbed. Mangal too was in the troop. He and many others refused to use those bullets, as the tallow layer had to be removed with one's teeth. The temper erupted the officers and the angry soldiers got in to the real fight in which Mangal Pandey killed three officers. He was hanged thus becoming the first victim of revolution.

Hearing about the premature beginning of the revolution Gautam leaves the Ashram, he reaches the pyre where Mangal's body after execution was cremated. He was crying for this irrecoverable loss of a friend and the great fighter. The police sent Gautam to jail.

With this incident the revolution started prematurely. Since Tatya Tope had failed to get weapons from Rudradatta, Queen of Jhansi state Laxmbai came personally to get the support from Rudradatta who ultimately agreed when Laxmi promised never to held any arms in her hand and whenever he ordered their volunteers too would throw away their weapons. Laxmi had tasted the defeat on the battleground while protecting her state and felt like many of her activist hold friends that if a person like Rudradatta with philosophy of Non-violence joined the movement it would meet success.

One day Rudradatta along with Kalyani, Tryambak and Laxmi, took leave of his other inmates and villagers to join the movement. The dark night wore darker colours in the dense jungle and wild animal cries made the atmosphere more tense but none wanted to leave their Guru. Rudradatta while approaching a cave summoned them in, "Come, I will show you my Ghost." He took them through an underground tunnel, in to a large hall filled with all sorts of armaments. "Tryambak, this is the sword with which I have won many battles. Like you once I too harboured dream to free India using these weapons. Today they are rendered useless as we have much stronger weapon of Non-violence."

Early in the morning the mountains and surrounding villages echoed the terrible sound of explosions, Rudradatta had put fire to the stockpile.

By the time Rudradatta reached neighbouring village, he noticed that the violence of the movement had sporadically gripped this side of villages also. The Johnson family had been transferred to this place and they were the targets of the activists. When they heard that Rudradatta was visiting the village and was staying with his disciples at a *dharmshala*, they came to meet him. Lucy was overjoyed to see Tryambak who was in the backyard. She showed the gift from Guruji, "Look at this Tryambak." "What is it?" "Oh! Don't you understand? It's his blessing." "So what am I supposed to do?" "You fool! Marry me and tie this Rudraksha string around my neck." This really shocked Tryambak, "How can you talk like that. You are a white girl, a Britisher, non-vegetarian, Christian and I am a staunch Brahmin who cannot even touch you." The arguments went on for some time but Lucy won the battle of love, Tryambak did tie the string around her neck. But their happiness could not last for long. A violent mob had gathered near the gate, shouting at Rudradatta to hand over the priest and his daughter. Magnificent lion of an old man Rudradatta roared back, "Over my dead body." Shankar and his boatman took a shot at him and the huge body slumped on the shoulder of Tryambak with loud "OMKAAR" on the lips of the great Guruji.

When Peterson came to know about the imprisonment of Gautam done wrongfully he got him released immediately.

Mahavir, the old man confesses to have bribed Shankar to kill Rudradatta because he thought his principle of Non-violence would hinder the revolution. Gautam reached the village at a great speed but was too late to save him instead he saw his dead body on the pyre. Tryambak took vowed not to touch weapons ever again in his life.

Gautam completely dejected with life, takes over the command of revolutionary forces working in the central province. Kalyani and Tryambak helped him in their own way by nursing the wounded. One day Gautam's battalion had surrounded a cantonment area where few British officers were hiding with their families: On reaching the entrance Gautam shouted, "I do not kill innocent ones, children or women so all come out for safety." Hearing his voice, Jackson, one of his colleagues from those early war days comes out too and manages his permission to stay for a night on compassionate ground, which ends up in total disaster for next morning. The fresh British troops arrived on the scene and surrounded them from all the sides. Gautam and his valiant fighters fought till the last. That villain of an officer Jackson also was fallen on the ground, crying for a drop of water. Gautam took pity on him and started pouring water from his pouch, but the wicked soul stabbed him. Gautam's head fell on the corps of that villian.

Next when Gautam opened his eyes he realised that he was resting in the lap of Kalyani. He gave faint smile in recognition, "Kalyani, Guruji was right," he inhaled deeply, 'In the victory of revenge for power, lies... the series of defeats...' I want the victory through love..." "But what about your weapons?" "I have thrown them away..." Then Gautam, we can marry..." Tryambak who was standing behind started reciting slokas for the marriage ceremony, Gautam stretched his arms like a garland around Kalyani's face drawing her nearer and stamping his eternal kiss. Lucy standing right behind Tryambak was paying her tribute with flowing tears.

SORATH TARA VAHETAN PANI

(SORTH, YOUR FLOWING WATER)

Jhaverchand Meghani

(Year of publication - 1937)

JHAVERCHAND MEGHANI (1896-1947) has pride of a place among literary world. He was working in Kolkata with the department of research in the field of folk literature. He gave that up to travel extensively within Saurashtra and oriented people to various forms of literature of Gujarat and Saurashtra. His contribution is immense in every category of literature, be it poetry, fiction, short stories, critical appreciations, biography, one act plays etc. His poems in Gujarati reflected heartfelt sentiments of Gandhiji and freedom fighters. Gandhiji called him a 'national poet'. In his vast contribution stark reality is reflected. *Sorath Tara Vahetan Pani* is considered the first folk based novel in Gujarati. It gives the interesting account of life of Sorath.

About the Story :

'Sorath Tara Vahtan Pani' is the first of its kind of rural based fiction. It gives an interesting account of people from Sorath during the early 19th century. Different communities of Kathiyawad are projected in it. The touch of humanity among bandits and nobbles, British connections of local royalties and reflections on their style of living, harassment of common people are depicted. The entire story is filled with emotions.

Another unique feature is, it has no hero, heroine or a love triangle. This is a thrilling account of the fascinating Kathiyawadi community.

SORATH TARA VAHETAN PANI

(SORATH, YOUR FLOWING WATER)

In the lush green valley of Girnar there is a government police station at Bhairavgadh. If any clerk wanted to harass a member from any other caste, he just had to complain to the British chief, that that particular police station needed a strong police officer who could deal with people more firmly. The word "firm dealings" they loved and immediately they would appoint a disciplined police personnel.

One such Brahmin police constable Mahipatram was caught up in one such crafty manipulation. He got down at Shital station to reach Bhairavgadh, with his father, wife, daughter and also his sister's son Pinaki. Two bullock carts were waiting at the station, one to pile up luggage and the other one for Mahipatram's family. It was dusk, the road was unknown and infested with dacoits. Their guard belonged to the community Kathi and he had planned with the bullock cart driver to lead the passengers astary. The cart was way laid, and was attacked. The only thing the attackers had not taken into the account was Mahipatram. He gave them a stiff fight single-handed and drew away the Kathi bandits, shouting behind them, "You foolish looters, you think you have drunk Kathi mother's milk and I have suckled at a nincompoop of some Brahmin mother! Ah! OH, little ones, you and I have suckled at this mountain, do you understand?" Poor Nandu, Mahipatram's daughter had recently delivered a baby, turned unconscious at this squabble. The carts reached Devaki with a fainted Nadu to nearby village. The Darbar Patgar welcomed them warmly and were received by Rukhad Seth of Devaki, a businessman in his home. Nandu was immediately taken in. As they entered the front yard a woman was standing

in the corner. Mahipatram's nephew Pinaki saw her. She did not seem to be the Seth's wife. In the dim light of the lantern, she looked too thin, her hands were without any bangles. Her rather tight blouse hardly hidden under flimsy gaudy coloured half sari and tied over a large flowing petticoat. With her dark complexion she looked more like a police constable who had returned after Id celebrations or beating chest rituals at a Taziyas somewhere. She was a kept to Rukhad Seth. Pinaki stared at her with gaping mouth. She was giving massage to Nandu's inert body with alcohol. The moment Nandu became conscious, Pinaki rushed to give the news to the family. Next morning Mahipatram's family left for their onward journey. They reached Bhairavgadh by the same evening.

On the third day news reached that the village Devaki was in the grip of utter panic because Rukhad Seth had vowed to kill Kana who had insulted his mother.

Once the vacations were over Pinaki left for his school to return again to his uncle during Diwali. He went straight to the police station, picked up a stray mare and came home. After a while he heard shouting. The mare on which he had rode home was creating a terrible commotion. The incharge policeman asked to remove the mare to the jail where her owner was jailed. Pinaki too followed the mare. He recognised the prisoner. It was Rukhad Seth. He was accused of murdering Kana Patel as he had vowed. At that time the police officer's middle daughter Pushpa came and stood near him silently weaving her fingers in to the Mar's hair. He pulled away his band and went to buy millet for the mare.

When Pinaki was returning, the berry trees laden with yellow fruits created a canopy with enchanting fragrance. That reminded him of Dewalba, constable Danasinha's daughter. He would bring Devalba to the river to pick those luscious fruits for her. Devalba was his childhood friend. Suddenly Pinaki's idling mind was brought back to the jabbering of his cart man, "The king of Vikrampur is getting married to one Devalba."

Kathi Darbar of Bhadrapur had killed two of his wives and the British officer needed help; he demanded three efficient,

dedicated and strict policemen to investigate the case. Mahipatram was one of those chosen who went to Rajkot. Pinaki also accompanied his uncle. Next day Rukhad Seth and another prisoner were to be hanged. They were being taken away in a bullock cart. Pinaki recognised one of the prisoners and shouted, "Hay! that one is our Rukhad Seth." A police asked, "How come he is 'yours!'"

"Well I stayed for a night at his house, rode his mare and he had promised me to give me many more rides on his mare." The prisoner heard the raised voice of Pinaki, he raised his eyes, recognition flashed. Rukhad gave a smile to Pinaki, raising his cuffed hands. Pinaki forgot the presence of vigilance police and ran after his cart to bid 'Ram Ram' with folded hands. The guard pushed him away so forcefully that if he had no support from somebody he would have fallen down on the ground to be crushed under the feet of the crowd. His eyes fell on the protective hand around him adorned by colourful bangles.

Pinaki's eyes searched the eyes of the person. His lips moved, words came out in a rush, "Aha! Bhanabhai (nephew brother) why are you here?" "Aha! Auntie you?" That was the police woman, Rukhad Seth's mistress.

"Come Bhanabhai, we will first lead the mare than I will come to bid you good bye at the station." "When will you come next?" Pinaki could not hide his eagerness. "I will come to help you in your rides."

Next day Pinaki and his auntie went and met the British officer who was in charge of the murder of Bhadrapur. The British officer gave a note of recommendation to the Suba, the district administrator.

The auntie left her Bhanabhai from there and went to her new residence at Dhvajdhari temple (Hanuman temple).

Bhanabhai was now waiting for his train. At last the train arrived, few of its bogies were decorated with flowers. From the conversation of the people gathered around, Pinaki over heard that Ravalji, the king of Vikrampur and the royal marriage party, was going with the new bride Dewalba. Pinaki felt his heart stop beating, he waited for another train.

Mahipatram, disregarding his own safety, caught the Darbar of Kathi. The government honoured him with the title of 'Rao Saheb' and promoted him.

Some one knocked at the door of the Dhvajdhari temple at midnight. Rukhad Seth's widowed policewoman kept the gate opened. Three visitors from Devaki village, entered. They were Lakshman, Vashiyang and Punjo. As they were chating with her they recognised her. Laxman had killed his father and the landlord. Now he had formed his own group of outlaws and the police was after him. Rukhad's mistress gave them shelter and promised them her protection and the four took a pledge before the idol of Lord Hanuman.

Once again Mahipatram was transferred to this mountainous region of Girnar to catch Laxman and his gang. The welcome function in honour of the king of Vikrampur was arranged at Rajkot in Pinaki's school. The British officer also managed a scholarship for Pinaki through the king. The Darbar of Kadi Bedi, Surendradev also was present at the function, he was dressed like a farmer of Kathiyawad. The school presented a play 'Sikandar' and after that Surendradev addressed the meeting. "We, the small and big kings are like reincarnation of Sikandar. In this play the way Indian soldiers and people told Sikandar, you too tell the foreign invaders we are not dacoits, we are Indians." The young audience, clapped, the headmaster grated his teeth, the king of Vikrampur refused to address the meeting. Thus the function ended on a dissatisfaction and bitterness.

During this period England declared war on Germany in Europe. The British government to meet its war expenses, looted money from the kings of Indian states. The recruitment for army started. Surendradev refused any help in this respect to the government and faced the wrath of the British.

Mahipatram, who was at Gir region refused goat's meat for the British officers. He was pulled up. Mahipatram roared back like a lion of Gir at the officer," One more word in a raised voice and I quit your job. Here is your belt and the badge." The officer demoted him.

After this incident Mahipatram received a letter from an unknown person. He was requested to keep silent for few days

so that Laxman and the other fugitives could be shifted to another place from the Gir forest. Mahipatram was shaken after the scene with the officer and was not able to decide on his future course of action, when his guard brought information that Laxman and his co-partners had consumed poison and were lying unconscious in the grassland. Mahipatram refused to catch the culprits like that, "I will never catch an enemy when he is ill." So the jamadar went to the British chief with the tip and the officer decided to go with his police party to arrest Laxman. By that time the lady police also reached the spot brings Laxman back to consciousness and gave him his rifle. Laxman and his group along with the lady, fought fierce battle with the police party. Laxman and his partners died in the fight. The lady police, widow of Rukhad Seth was arrested and taken to Rajkot with the dead bodies.

The court case started. Describing it, the author writes, "The figure of that woman glided in a manner which would make a royal lady look pale walking towards a temple. Every thing in her face, her pace, her every step, conveyed a silence. No, she was not acting. She was walking the way she was. Her hands moved as if they were carrying a rifle."

Her eyes roamed and searched the room catching up few known faces in the crowd. "It is better not to be recognised," thinking thus the villagers averted their eyes. None here could look eye-to-eye with her.

In that narrow corridor, a path was cleared within the crowd. She walked on. Pinaki, like a mechanical doll shouted, "Aunty!" "Who's that?" She turned her gaze in the direction where Pinaki was getting up. "Aha! Bhanabhai? Jai Dhajala (Jai Lord Hanuman)! When did you grow so big! Even your voice has changed! May God bless you," Saying thus she went nearer moving her hands over his head to bless him. The police guard was confused, whispering, "Oh! No, don't my lady... Bhanbhai not here."

The guard respected one as a female bandit and also the other one, whom he had fondled as a nephew of his brave chief Mahipatram.

“Aha! My brother! Only for a moment!” She rubbed her fingers fondly around his neck, explaining to the guard, with a grin in her eyes, “He is my child, I am seeing him after ages!”

While talking to the guard she looked at him seriously, Pinaki melted completely at the words “My child.” The nectar of an aunt's touch was sipping into every fibre of his body through her rubbing fingers. The lady police was accused for abetting and co-operating with outlaws and was to be sentenced to seven years imprisonment.

Difficult days had arrived for Mahipatram. He was accused of disobedience of his superior's order and indiscipline. He was removed from his post. Pinaki's exam form was held back on the excuse of insufficient attendance in English class, not only that his scholarship was also terminated. Pinaki had to return home. He learnt about the demise of the king of Vikrampur and Devalba became a widow. The British government took away the kingdom from the heir thus Deval was buried in the avalanche of miseries. Pinaki was shaken with all these events happening one after another.

The war ended in Europe in the month of November 1918. Britain had won but left Indian soldiers unattended. Surendradev gave shelter unhesitatingly to those Indian soldiers neglected by the Britisher. Pinaki failed to appear for his exams. Surendradev took him under his wings and got him a job at his friend Jhuhar Seth's orchard not only that Surendradev promised Pinaki to take care of his maternal grand parents.

Six months passed since Pinaki took over the job. One evening he received a letter from his grandma. Pinaki set for his village on foot. Jhuhar Seth sent his servant with enough things and food grains and asked Pinaki not to worry about any thing.

When Pinaki reached home he got terribly frightful news. One was that his aunty ran away from jail. Another was that Pushpa had written a letter to him which her family got hold of and they gave her severe beatings and tortured her so much so that Pushpa ran away from her family. Without informing his own family Pinaki went in search of Pushpa. He roamed

from place to place. On hearing noises he went in the direction of the noise. He noticed people had gathered around a cart in which Pushpa was sitting with policemen. The Moment she saw Pinaki she gave loud piercing cry. Pinaki felt fient. He asked, "Where are you taking her?" The Police curtly replied, "She has an illegitimate baby in her womb and she was trying to commit suicide by jumping in a well. We caught her, now we will take her to Rajkot."

Pinaki tried to console Pushpa and was following the cart deep in thought. A policeman asked, "Why are you walking with this cart?" Promptly he replied, "I am getting married to her, please release her." The police let Pushpa off and Pinaki went straight to Jhuhar Seth, with her.

Before Pinaki could reach the farm some culprits went by car to Jhuhar Seth. The Moment he saw them he understood the purpose of their visit. Jhuhar Seth picked his gun in one hand and the other hand he extended to shake with the visitors. The strangers were stunned; they had come to warn Jhuhar Seth against giving shelter to Pushpa and Pinaki and if the need be to give him a sound thrashing. None could come forward to hold his extended hand. Now the Seth showed his true colours. He asked them, "Is there anyone who can confront prince who has raped this girl! Does anyone have the guts to make her his daughter-in-law? Curse for me for in spite of knowing everything I am sitting here quietly. I have brought shame to my weapons. Mother earth is not small. She will provide shelter to her children." Then he taunted the guests, "Don't you try to meet Ravalji, no need to show me any pity. Ravalji cannot pressurise me." Jhuhar Seth then added, "In case you cannot find your way may I send some of my guards? They will show you the way."

But the visitors sat in their car and left. On the way they met the cart carrying Pushpa and Pinaki and some of them felt like pelting stones at them but an elderly one prevented them.

When the car left, Pushpa asked Pinaki, "Suppose Jhuhar Seth does not give us shelter?" Pinaki answered with confidence, "He will definitely give us a home. Don't worry." But when they reached the farm she told him, "You better go in first, and if he says yes, I will come."

Before they could get down from the cart, Jhuhar Seth reached them, "Hello! Hope those motorists did not trouble you! I was afraid of that." Then he invited them in and welcomed them. "Come, come in. There is no need to fears now."

Next day he called a Brahmin and told him, "Maharaja, you have to conduct a wedding ceremony. I will be the father of this girl, have you the courage?" The Brahmin was ready, "Of course I have the courage." "But you may be jailed." "Then you too will be with me. I shall make mouth watering dishes for you in the jail."

Pushpa and Pinaki were married. The marriage was legal because both were of marriageable age. Time passed.

Once Gandhiji's followers came and informed them that Surendradev had joined *Satyagraha* giving up his throne. The government had thrown out the queen mother of Vikrampur. The king of Pravingadh had helped the British rule, he was awarded the title of 'Sir'.

Pushpa's time for delivery approached. Poor thing was suffering very badly. Pinaki ran to Seth, "Poor soul is suffering."

Jhuhar Seth calmed him saying there was nothing to worry about. Then just to take his test he asked Pinaki, "In case Pushpa did not survive?" "Then I will go to Pravingadh and take the revenge on the tyrant for his sins."

"If that happens then you will have my full support." Jhuhar Seth told him, "Hope that event is far off. At present we will have to wait for Surendradev. Let us wait for him."

The two started walking towards the river and their footsteps were itched on the river bank.

MALELA JIVA

(SOULS UNITED)

Pannalal Patel

(Year of publication - 1941)

PANNALAL PATEL (1912-1988) born in a small village of Sabarkantha district in a peasant family. He started writing short stories though he did not complete a formal education. His writings reflect the sweetness of Gujarati. When his stories started appearing in well-known magazines, critics appreciated his treatment of the themes and his unique style. Highest of awards for Gujarati literature the goldmedals of Ranjitram and Narmad were bestowed upon him. Thus, climbing the ladder of success he reached the top with his novel, "*Maanvini Bhavaai*". This bagged him the Gyanpith Award. Many of his works are translated in other Indian languages. He has written in all sixty fictions and ten compilations of short stories. *Malela Jiva (United Souls)* is one of his earliest novels which was also made into a film titled "Ulzan."

About the Story :

'Malelaa Jiva' represents Pannalal Patel's unparalleled skill in narrating a story as a writer. This story brought him name among the top Gujarati writers. It has all the specialities of rural life of Sabarkantha, he has presented the story in the delicate folk language. All the attributes of a graphic presentation of rural living, rugged in superstitions and rituals, local fair, marriage and death, rigidity of caste system and close-knit society are woven together. This novel has gained a unique position among the representative novels of Gujarati language.

MALELLA JIVA

(SOULS UNITED)

Janmashtami (the birthday of Lord Krishna) fair in the Valley of Kavadiya Mountain is an occasion of fun and frolics for the village folk. After silence almost for a year the valley reverberated with flutes and drums, folk dances and songs, laughter and life. It appeared as if the ocean of human beings moving to the fair and the temple of Mahadev and Kaleshri ma. Among the crowd were Kanji playing on his flute, Hiro, Kali and others from the village Udhadiya had also been to the fair. The group reached near giant wheel, it stopped for its last round the last cart stopped, Kanji jumped into it disregarding a strange girl sitting in the cart. The girl shunted and called for her friend Mani who could not get in. Kanji paid off for her ticket and the wheel moved upward. Every thing happened too hurriedly to follow Mani or Hira's shouts to get down. Jivi mumbled to Kanji, "I will pay you when I get down."

Watching the side face of this manly, daring, unknown youth Jivi boldly asked him, "Are these flutes just for show off!" His crisp reply was, "First to show and then to play." Kanji played and sang and the two were in the seventh heaven.

Kanji was physically with his friends but his eyes followed her. He even managed an excuse to follow her and her friend Mani to Jogipura village. Hiro too joined him in talk with Jivi's blind father. Jivi was aware that she belonged to barber community considered to be low caste in the village but she offered tea and hookah to them, which was accepted without any hesitation. He even managed a parting remark, "Will have to come here again, do not forget." Jivi still intoxicated with the pleasant encounter at the fair whispered, "... Can we ever?"

All the friends and even their Guru, Bhagat were aware of the subtle change in Kana. Hiro even dared to bring the subject to warn him against as she was from low caste. Kano too cursed himself; "You pig! Not of your own caste or creed and you are mad after her?" He also had to worry about his crippled elder brother and his family. As days went by his restlessness increased and on the flimsiest excuse of getting lost on the way he reached Jivi's house. Her stepmother did show her anger but Jivi took him out to show him to the village, where he pretended to go. "Aren't you ashamed of bringing dishonour to your higher caste?" "I was not ashamed to dishonour my soul let alone my caste... since I met you I have not had proper meal even." Jivi's silent reply was, "Here too who has eaten?" Kanji said frankly, "The day I lose my patience I will kidnap you in your sleep." "Well, that any one can do in this world, take me away when I am awake then I will know your worth."

Hiro was now extremely apprehensive about Kanji so he confided Bhagat about the happening of the fair. Bhagat, the real saint as his name suggested said plainly, "The creator of the problem will solve it... Why worry!"

Hiro mustered his courage while sipping his cup of tea and broached the subject to Kana. "What is it that draws you to her?" "Oh Hira! She will even jump into a well if I asked her... The God has filled the universe with abundance of beauty but where do you find such heart?" The bosom friend even found a solution for his suffering friend. "Kana, why not bring her here?" "But how?" "Dhuliyo Ghainjo (barber), who else?" Kanji sucked the hookah passed on by his friend and understanding the implication of Hira's suggestion, "How dare you suggest such a thing? She is cuckoo and the crow of your Dhuliyo!"

However with intense struggle within himself Kanji found no other solution for his love "At least she will in front of my eyes."

Kanji fixed the night of Dhanteras, the auspicious day of Diwali, went to Jivi to fix with her. Guiltily he told her that she could even reject his proposal. Jivi's heart sank, "He had not come to take me but..." Aloud she said, "I will follow you wherever you take me."

The groom Dhuliyo, ugly, aged widower, darker than the darkest night, was happily trotting like a monkey behind Kanji and Hiro. Kanji was irritated and angry at his wrong decision, tried till the end of the road to dissuade Dhuliyo from hasty decision. Reaching Joshipur they saw Jivi waiting alone at the place he had suggested. Kanji told Jivi, "Go back if you want, still there is time, I am telling you, please do believe me. Why cheat yourself?"

Before the sleepy village welcomes them Kanji took her into his arms, "I am pushing you away from me in this life... what do I do?" Dhuliyo saw this but what could he do?

Nanikaki, the mother of Dhuliyo and the whole village participated in the wedding praising away the luck of this ugly duckling to be so fortunate to have such a beautiful bride. Bhagat sighed in the ear of Kanji, "Since you have brought her here, do keep up with the decorum."

Kanji and Hiro as the rest of the village got busy tilling their land. Kanji avoided meeting Jivi. She came to visit his family on New Year day as was the custom but he remained in his bed. He thought, "How can I cheat myself?" He even prevented his niece Ratan with whom Jivi tried to be friendly. The days passed into months and Kanji kept away from Jivi. It was unbearable for Jivi.

One day she went to his farm. He was engrossed in repairing his flute. Shocked, he asked, "Why have you come?" "Why? Are you so worried about people gossiping?" "Not that but if that monkey saw us together he will bite you." But the initial tension eased out and they enjoyed that moment alone with each other.

One morning Kanji was irrigating his farm. He saw Jivi fetching water from the village well. He was staring at her singing at the top of his voice and drawn by it she came and stood before him disregarding the wagging tongues of the village folks.

Hiro was aware of the strong attraction between the two and Bhagat said smilingly, "My friend, what do you know about the power of the woman's eyes." "Believe it or not, my friend is beaten by some black magic." "Lord Shivaji tumbled before

the power what to talk of his poor soul? This is life Hira." Bhagat as always was philosophical.

That night Jivi got serious redressal from her all-powerful husband. Kanji called Dhuliyo to his farm "Do not ever touch her again... You think I am having affair with her! Why do you listen to the silly gossips of that wicked sorcerer Reshma? The poor girl has come with you, keep her happy, otherwise you know the result." Dhuliyo was scared stiff.

Holi festival was over. The village was in different mood. "Bhamti ma, a roaming Goddess" possessed few bodies and the timid villagers fell prey to the wrath of those Maatajis. Reshma too danced with them shaking and stamping. Kanji was irritated. His youthful temper rose against Reshma and he publicly challenged him to prove the divine element in his body by touching a hot iron. His brother, sister in law and even Jivi prevented him in getting into the wrong side of the spirit. The farce stopped when Bhagat intervened but the busy buddies got the material for their wagging tongue. Dhuliyo even requested the Bhamti ma to get into Jivi to take revenge. Kanji was absolutely shattered and he decided to quit the village at least for few months. He was spending the last night at his farm, trying to calm his inner turmoil. Suddenly he heard agonising cry of Reshma coming strangely from Dhuliyo's house. Kanji jumped behind the huge tamarind tree. He saw the village chief eyeing him suspiciously. Kanji clarified, "I am watching in case some one ran out of that house." When again the shrill cry came out from the hut Kanji ran into it, he found Reshma in pool of blood. Sensing the outcome he scolded Nanikaki "What is all these?" "I do not know. We were awake till the night, my son has gone to another village. Then we slept locking our doors." By that time many had thronged the hut. Some one from the crowd added, "When Nanikaki opened her door to see who was shouting in the front yard, we took Reshma's cot inside otherwise we would have taken him some where else." Kanji hurriedly started cleaning his wound and Bhagat bandaged him, softly told Kanji, "They shouldn't have taken him in." Kanji said, "But there were witnesses." The village chief returned with a police officer. With great effects he collected their testimony. The chief had contrived indicators towards Jivi and later, on Kanji,

who convinced the officer to undertake thorough check of the neighbourhood. Ultimately after lot of juggling the facts came out. Reshma entered Bhima's residence to rape his daughter who stuck him hard on the head with a heavy vessel. Next day the inspector pocketed his bribe and left the village.

Kanji was given warm farewell by the entire village. Bhagat too bid him goodbye. Hiro went up to the riverbank, Kanji pleaded to him to take care of Jivi, "There is no one who can take care of her except you." Then Kanji swam across the river. He spotted Jivi far away from villager's eyes. She remained as subdued as possible and they surfed on formal topics but suddenly Kanji said, "Jivi, listen to me. Let us go away together!" Jivi was moved. She kept her eyes on the ground saying, "No, no. You go..." She hid her face in her sari turning away from him. She ran away towards the village. Kanji stared after her and forced himself to move in the opposite direction.

When Dhuliyo returned to the village, he gave her real merciless beatings, "You bitch! Which hubby of yours was going abroad? So you went to leave him... You prostitute?" Even his mother tried to intervene but Duliyo went on with his beatings. Now it was unbearable for Jivi, she snatched away his stick from his hand, and spitted fires, "You eunuch... good for nothing... beating me here...!" Dhuliyo was dumb founded to see such a different Jivi. Bhagat came running, scolded all of them and even Jivi, "What is all these... Can't you find some poison?"

Jivi became hardened as the days went by. The days without Kanji turned into months. Her father died but she did not go to visit her stepmother. Nano, another village youth came on short visit from city. He passed on bangles, which Kanji had sent for her. Dhuliyo watched them alone in a farm. Moment she entered the hut he threw a piece of log at her. Ultimately she collapsed on her cot. When, fuming Dhuliyo and gossipers left she went to Nano. He felt miserable at her sight, "I am sorry, you are beaten, all because of me." She managed trace of smile saying, "No... no..." She returned the bangles, "Tell him I have returned these. He can gift them to his wife."

This time Dhuliyo's beating was so merciless that if Bhagat had not arrived on the scene he would have killed her. Bhagat

took her to his house. Dhuliyo swallowed thick *rotlas* (bread) cursed her for foul smell and gross negligence of household and left for his farm to spend the night.

Jivi was moaning in her half consciousness, "Bhagat kaka... The *rotlas* are for me. Oh! My God, let me go... If he...!" And She fell unconscious.

Bhagat realising from her mumblings something grave must have happened to Dhuliyo if he consumed those *rotlas*. He went to Dhuliya's farm, and he found him dead.

The villagers noticed his body turned into black. Bhagat declared that Dhuliyo died of some poisonous bite. Jivi was completely mentally derailed; she roamed around in her tattered sari, unkempt hair, without wash or even food, eyes hungrily watching the boundary of their village. Many held her responsible for Dhuliya's death. Even Kanji uneasily asked Bhagat "Has she...?" Hiro and Bhagat both advised him not to rig up the past. Kanji left with heavy guilt and worries. Bhagat reached him at a distance, "Kanji, the *rotla* she prepared for her own consumption, and Dhuliyo was served that unknowingly by some one else." Bhagat gave all the details of the happenings of that night. One thought hammered Kanji constantly, "If she had died...!"

When Jivi came to know that Kanji left without meeting her she blew her top, went to Bhagat, "Why! Your friend left without seeing me?" She lost her sense, her world spin and collapsed. She became a formless entity to be teased and tormented by kids and strangers. Bhagat would sigh with terrible ache in his heart, "Oh God! Where was she born, whom did she love, where was she married and what was her condition now...? Why?"

The villagers had gone to Nagdhara along with Jivi for a dip on auspicious night of Kartiki poonam, which they believed cured all evils and illnesses. Suddenly Kanji appeared on the scene, "Hey! You idiots, what are you doing to her? Kali, please put on some clean clothes on her." Kanji was holding Jivi's shivering body possessively like a husband. He told Bhagat, "I am taking her away. At least she will be before my eyes." Hira's objection did not deter him. Kanji pushed Jivi in a waiting car. Bhagat heaved a sigh of relief, "When the souls are united...!"

DEEPNIRVAN

(LIGHT OF DELIVERANCE)

Manubhai Pancholi-“Darshak”

(Year of publication - 1944)

MANUBHAI PANCHOLI-“DARSHAK” (1914-2001) was born in 1914 into farmer family of Panchashila village. When he was in the 9th standard, Gandhiji's 'No Taxation' movement against the British started. Manubhai gave up his studies to join it. Later he completed his education at the rural university, Gram Vidyapith-“Daksina moorthy.” He wrote fiction, philosophical essays and introduced the Gujarati reader to other foreign literature with his own commentaries. His novel, *Socrates* earned him the Sahitya Academy Award. This is the first fiction in Gujarati based on a Greek subject. He was also awarded the Ranjitram Gold Medal and the Narmad Gold Medal for his unique contribution to Gujarati literature. He was often invited abroad to discourse and address audiences in Britain and America. He was a true scholar of Indian culture, one finds Gandhian influence in his writing.

About the Story :

Ancient Bharat knew about democracy. The novel has used this background introducing us to the atmosphere of ancient rule. He has chosen the period of Sikander's invasion and Maurya's rule; he has brought out succinctly the elements of Indian culture, with his own creativity. The story, instead of turning into a love triangle between Anand, Sucharita and Sudatta, comes across as a story of exciting struggle of small and big republican states trying to ward off Sikandar's invasion and the greed to expand the Magadh Empire. This is the first historical novel in Gujarati depicting the subject of republican states of ancient and medieval India.

The promoter of the democratic rule the great sage Kashyap says, "Democracy is a culture. It does not exist in town halls, courts or forts. Let all those things be destroyed but never the sentiment of democracy." Thus you see here a mixture of modern sentiments and ancient feelings, effectively brought out.

DEEPNIRVAN (1944)

(LIGHT OF DELIVERANCE)

The early dawn filled with the strains of the Veena, coming from the Ashram of Maha Kashyap at Nandigram. Anand rose, like a rising sun, from his chariot. He walked towards the main gate and pushed it slightly; he was transfixed... a beautiful maiden, dressed in white, long hair sprawling like a cascade on her face, fingers like petals of roses, moving and playing the Veena to the steps of a dancing peacock couple on the basil pot... The first sun rays fell on her tresses and they glittered brighter than the Sun.

“Sucharita...” the call from Maha Kashyap broke the spell. Anand bowed down at the feet of his Guru who would teach him Ayurveda. He introduced his grand daughter and asked, “Anand how is your grandpa, Atreya? Your father Sheelbhadra is a great scholar himself in the healing science. He will teach you better. Sucharita, you take this proficient warrior son to Arya Suvrata.” “Who is she?” Anand asked. “Your own mother Gautami... Anand don't you know?” His grand father had told him that his parents were dead. Maha Kashyap said they are alive, and staying at Nirvangiri! his heart burst like a volcano and he ran into the jungle close by... Sucharita ran after him shouting, “Anand... Oh! Please Do not go there!” He was crying near a stream. She shouted fearfully. “Do not jump, there is a wild crocodile...” “What does it matter to you?” And he jumped. Sucharita was frozen... Watching battle between beast and man. When the victorious one returned, her fear turned to anger, “How would I have faced Maa Gautami if...?” The rest of her words evaporated seeing the red glow of absolute anger spreading over his face. “Never utter their names again before me... or I will leave this place.” They returned in silence. A Malav youth, the fire God Indra personified was restlessly, striding to the gate. “Anand meet our Nagarshreshthi Dhanpal's (sheriff) son, Sudatta

the renown sculptor of our Nandigram." Anand broke the silence, "Aren't you the one who lost the chariot race last year in the Vahik state's annual meet?" Sudatta stared at him with red eyes and left in huff. Sucharita smiled, "Ah! Anand you have angered him, avoid it hence forth!"

Sucharita was testing him in the presence of their guru and other disciples. His answers were crisp, and intelligent. Her last question, "How attractive are the sun's rays," earned quick reply, "As attractive as your hair..." The words stumbled and Anand could not lift his eyes off the ground. The audience broke into laughter. Had he looked up he would have noticed her blushing and Sudatta's eyes turning red with anger.

Anand taught Sucharita to ride a chariot and Sudatta was jealous of the two. They were sharing and enjoying a new bond growing with each other. He even tried to push Anand off the chariot. Sudatta ultimately went away to Shakal, the capital of Kathagan to pursue his studies.

Maha Kashyap was worried about the growing despair of Anand. Sucharita went every day to study under Gautami and Sheelbhadra. One day she broached the subject to Anand, "Why not come with me, at least once?" "Haven't I asked you not to utter their names?" Kashyap intervened, "Then Ma will have to come here... Why Anand, do you want your mother to suffer?" "His pride..." Suchi scorned at him. "Why should I worry about the parents who did not bother about me?" "My son! How wrong you are. When your mother wanted to marry Sheelbhadra, your grandpa did not approve. I conducted her wedding. When Atreya's rejections became unbearable for Sheelbhadra he decided to leave taking Gautami along, but she refused because of you. Poor soul suffered alone, penniless and ignored by her father, bringing up the new born." Kashyap sighed deeply.

"The struggle went on for fourteen years. Sheelbhadra adopted Buddhism and settled down here at Nirvangiri establishing his monastery. Once he took very ill and thought he was dying. He wanted to impart knowledge to his wife before dying as he had promised her. Gautami came, on receiving a message from me, leaving you with your grandfather Atreya." Anand was intently listening. "She realised, that she will have

to adopt Buddhism to attend to her husband. "She came running to me crying, 'Uncle, does this mean I lose my motherhood for my Anand because I adopted Baddhism?'" When she heard that you had injuries she kept fast like a devoted Hindu mother. Anand remembered, and admitted, "When grandfather received your letter he was disturbed but he was extremely upset when Ma changed her religion. He threw away her letter shouting, 'Your mother is dead, she has caught the illness.' I started crying and he yelled, 'Don't ever cry over her...' but now I know how my ma has suffered. Uncle I will protect her at any cost." "That is not needed, just do not make her more unhappy."

Arya Suvrata's attention was drawn to a little boy clad in deer skin, matted hair over the head added to his height, climbing briskly, with Maha Kashyap and Sucharita; her heart skipped. "My God... My Anand... !" The next moment Anand was sobbing in her lap and her tears washing away all. When Gautami told Maha Kashyap that Sheelbhadra left that morning on a long pilgrimage, he nodded thinking silently, "Only yesterday I gave him news about the invasion of Mainendra, the Shaka king on Sindhu pradesh. He must have gone to counsel him against attacks." He remembered Sheelbhadra's words, "Maha Kashyap, our Tathagat has taught us Ahimsa and protecting animals. Who will stop this massacre?"

Every one noticed that Sucharita, who was once an ardent lover of Sudatta's art, was attracted to Anand. Sudatta could not tolerate this who was extremely possessive of his dream girl. Anand too was conscious of changes in himself. "Don't I want to imitate his hairstyle, apply fragrant oil and keep my hair loose on my shoulder?" Sucharita admitted her love to Anand and the two were ecstatic over it. She even wanted to talk it over with Sudatta after the annual inter state sports meet of Vahik Gana was over.

Once, at Nirvangiri Sucharita saw Sudatta engrossed in carving Padmapanni "How beautiful! If you win the art competition this time then I will give you whatever you ask." The days went by. Once Anand and Sucharita visited him at the sight, the two were wonder struck with its beauty. Sudatta reminded her of the promise. She said, "The event will be

organised in two days, you have turned yourself into stone while working with stone." Even Anand pleaded, "Sudatta, be a real artist. Even I will surrender all my possessions if you win in the chariot race." Foolishly he asked, "Even Sucharita?" "She is not my possession."

Malavgana was host for the inter state sports event of Vahik Gana. The chief of Malavgan, Asang, Maha Kashyap, Dhanpal and many others were involved in the preparations. Anand was preoccupied with his horses and Sucharita was supportive in his practice.

The stadium was packed on the opening day. Important people were in their seats. Even Atreya was there to witness the game. Asang opened the show formally and ten chariots thundering like clouds came in to the arena and stopped before the royal pavilion. Anand stood up in his chariot; the spectators were hushed to a complete silence. He bowed to the honourable guest and announced, "Sir, last night a participant tried to steal my horse. Today I challenge all the participants of the chariot race to start at 500 Dhanur (1 Dhanur=4 arms length) ahead of me." The arena reverberated with claps of approval.

The real competition was among Anand, Sudatta and Krishna, daughter of Kekya the chief of hilly region. Just as the chariots were entering the final round Anand's horse was injured, he signalled Krishna who was just behind him to move forward. But she refused as she had seen Sudatta injuring the horse with his spear. Some how Anand reached the winning line, his horse collapsed and he jumped to look after it.

On the spot inquiry was started by the special panel because Sudatta accused Anand of the cruelty to the animal. Sudatta even brought in some evidence about Anand who was born a Kath. As per their tradition, weak babies had no right to live and Anand was declared a weakling. However his mother Gautami ran away from there and brought him to Maha Kashyap. He added, "I have authentic report from the government's office from Shakal. Since I knew about his secrets he tried to push his spear at me. I threw mine in self-defence at him but accidentally it struck his horse."

The penal went through testimony and lengthy discussions

before declaring Anand not guilty and awarded him the trophy. Dhanpal, father of Sudatta, was angry at his son's crafty play and declared him a traitor. Sudatta was exiled for two years from Vahik Gana. Anand was appointed the commander in chief for the army of the union and was expected to take his charge by the next year. In the meantime he was to tour the member states preparing them of the advent of Mainendra who had reached Ghandhar Pradesh.

The same night Vasumitra, Agnimitra's brother of the emperor of Magadh Desh was hatching a plot roping in vexed Sudatta and some of the weaker member states. Krishna overheard about the plot and reported to Maha Kashyap. He grieved, "I am like a mother of gamblers who neither can think evil of her sons nor can do any good for them." He summoned an urgent meeting of all the chiefs of Vahik Gana. Emphasising the urgent need to strengthen united force he came to the point, "The powerful Magadh Desh which extends from Anga to Anavarta and Vidhya to Himalaya has sent his emissary, Vasumitra with a message of friendship for our Vahik union. I would like members to decide as to what should we do under the threat of Shaka invasion". Atreya was first to get up. "Small plants like our Brahmanak Gana will wither away under the huge Banyan tree... However we are committed to follow our union's chief Asang." The daughter of Kekya, Krishna was forthright, "If your interests are in saving Aryavarta then first why not free Anga, Vajji and others. When can question of friendship exist between the victims eatable and devourer?" Asang got up, "We are ready to ask for the friendship of Magadh desh when there will be need for it." Maha Kashyap rounded up saying, "We will formally decide after getting the opinion from the absentee members."

Next day Kashyap adjudged the sculpture of Padmapaani as the best entry. Sudatta ran to Sucharita asking for her hand in marriage, but he was stood breathless when saw Sucharita dressed as a Bauddha monk.

Anand too was shattered. "How can I see her without those long traces?" He left Nandigram immediately to meet and prepare the democratic republican states to unite and fight the impending invasion of the Shaka king and the land grabbing

greed of Magadh Desh. So far Shaka had captured states on the other side of Sindhu River. He visited Takshasheela, which had fallen into the hands of Yavans. He meets sage Ail who is still guarding the seat of knowledge; very few students are under him these days, which includes foreign students. He found even Krishna there. Even Mainendra studied here when he was young and often became victim to the pranks of Krishna, his co-student.

Talking to Ail, Anand said, "Why are you living under Yavans and these foreigners?" "I am living in the kingdom of Ma Saraswati. I distribute its wealth to those who come here. You know Anand I think, the Aryans must go to these casteless, cultureless tribes the way Buddhists reach to them. Tell your Vahik Gana states, Fight them with wisdom, not with weapons."

Anand was preparing to go further, when Sage Ail came with a stranger to bid him good-bye when Charudatta, a disciple of Maha Kashyap, came with a message from him that Sudatta had joined Vasumitra and the rift among Vahik states has widened. Then Charudatta joined him in his chariot to accompany him as per the orders from Sucharita. Before Anand could even object, the stranger too climbed in. Ail was mumbling to him "This time is fight for your marriage." The stranger told him, "I am coming to Purushpur where I am starting my medical practice."

At one point during their travel the three were taken as prisoners to Mainendra. That is where they learnt the real identity of that physician who was none other but that mischievous girl Krishna. Mainendra looked no different from his soldiers, dressed in ordinary coat made from sheep's skin and fur cap. Krishna was intently looking at scar on his forehead and Mainendra touched it with his finger rather consciously.

Anand found this warrior a peculiar combination of barbaric and civilised culture. He had observed vicarious pleasure on his face seeing a village looted and burnt. On the other hand the victorious king, from Warkan Ocean to Hindukush, would never touch any girl captured and brought for him. Though they were his prisoners, his behaviour with them and especially with outspoken Krishna was very polite.

Once he was talking about his great Guru Ail, and Krishna

taunted, "Has he taught you to invade Aryavarta!" Mainendra was at once on his guards, lest the girl should be a spy! "I paid him his fees." "Can one ever pay back for knowledge with gold and silver? Don't you remember the way your Guru and your co-student brought you back to good health?" Mainendra exclaimed, "My God! You are Krishna. Do you recognise me?" "Yes, I wanted to meet you before you start your blood bath. Alas! What am I seeing here? My Mainendra who could replace Sage Ail, is dead."

The two quarrelled, suffered and controlled their mutual attraction. One day Krishna could no more held back and proposed, "Let us marry, after your invasions are over and done with." "Why not before that?" "You think me to be a spy from Aryavarta." "As you wish." "But only if I am alive..." "What! You will fight against me?" "Of course, your first strike has to be on me." "No! For God's sake do not suffocate me."

Mainendra with his troops and the three prisoners reached Takshasheela. Ail declared their betrothal, giving a lavish party. Mainendra was so much impressed with the Aryan culture that he thought, "I can win Aryavarta but can I ever win Aryan culture? Who ever came here, merged in the ocean!" Mainendra was standing in Krishna's room. "I have sever headache... I... I do not want to start the war Krishna!" He slumped on the floor. Ail was passing by. He ran to him. "What is it my child?" "Saint Ail please, tell my commander... no invasion..." "Yes..." And the Guru ran out to stop the war preparations.

Kekya kanya Krishna and Mainendra were married and Anand and Charudatta left on their tour. Magadh was advancing its army towards Shakal. Maha Kashyap and others were shifting the people to some safer place in Aravalli range. He was of the opinion that democracy existed not in courts and forts but in the democratic feeling in heart of the people and that has to be protected. Vasumitra with his troop was across the river since five months holding Nandigram under siege. Malav Gana had only two options, either surrender to Magadh or vanish like Kurus and Panchals or die fighting like a true warrior. The people and the soldiers inside the fort of Nandigram were starving without food, milk and medicines. Upugram of Atreya was also under siege and many other states of Vahik Gana were

mining Magadh. Maha Kashyap shifted the entire population to Lavandveep, a Varun temple which can provide them shelter in the fort which was impregnable because it was covered by sea and mountains. Then after suddenly Nandigram started surprise attack on the idle, bored Magadh army. Maha Kashyap simultaneously recaptured Nirvangiri and prevented further destruction of beautiful sculpture of the monastery. Rohini brought the injured Prince of Magadh to Varun temple.

Moment Nirvangiri was freed Ma Gautami and her student Sucharita left to help injured ones. That is when Sucharita found Sudatta unconscious and in delirium. She nursed him to consciousness. He moaned, "I have lost everything. You will find some important notes in that box. Please pass it over to my Guru." He even freed Sucharita of her promise, before he died.

Agnimitra, the king of Magadh was kidnapped as per the instructions from Sudatta and his army was withdrawn from the Vahik union. But before the treaty was executed Vasumitra attacked the fort of Lavandveep. Rohini was killed when she came out to leave prince, Indumitra. When Atreya and Anand entered the fort, they found dead bodies scattered around. Atreya ran to a burning pyre, saw skeleton of Maha Kashyap and he broke down, sobbing. Sucharita, Ma Gautami and Sheelbhadra too had reached the place so had Krishna and Mainendra. Anand was looking at Sucharita after long separation and tension. They bowed at the feet of Sheelbhadra, who gave them affectionate hug saying the real marriage has to be solemnised austere before the sacrificial pyre outside the temple. Once the ritual was over Sheelbhadra turned to Mainendra, saying, "Great worrier, I am coming tomorrow to attend our coronation at Harrauvati." Mainendra folded his hands doing Namaskar. Krishna joked, "Hey! Bow your head a bit more, that will not lower your prestige..." The Varuna temple echoed laughter all around.

JANAMATEEP

(LIFE IMPRISONMENT)

Ishwar Petlikar

(Year of publication - 1946)

ISHWAR PETLIKAR (1915-1981) belonged to the village Petli and he changed his surname to Petlikar from Patel. He started writing from his school and college days and became quite well known among the writers of fiction, biographies and essays pertaining to social reforms. He also published a monthly magazine, *Sansar*. He received an international award for his story *Lohini Sagai*, and with that he entered the front line of writers. His creativity further unfolds in his 30 novels, 10 story-collections, essays etc. He is a recipient of many awards from Gujarat government. *Janamateep* is considered to be one of his best fictions.

About the Story :

'Janamateep' is not only one of the best novels but also has top position in Gujarati literature. This is the story of Patanwadiya community of Charotar. The story revolves around its characters; Chandra who belonged to a criminal tribe, is a robust example of ideal, dedicated and virtuous personality. Keeping the caste in the centre Petlikar has shown through the admixture of colours of interior and exterior feelings of the characters, their love and hatred. This novel has put him among the top writers because here he has shown how magnificently rich crop one can gain out of barren, hitherto uncultivated land.

JANAMATEEP

(LIFE IMPRISONMENT)

Chandra was about to pick up her sickle when she heard mother-in-law's voice, "I am going to the farm, you come with the children and food in the afternoon." Chandra noticed her husband Bhimal, eyes conveying her frustration and giving "go" signal to him. Bhima's eyes returned message "come soon." "The sets of eyes silently teased, cajoled, scolded and separated when Bhimo followed his father's footsteps. Poor newly weds hardly got any privacy in the small hut, over flowing with the in-laws, their privacy was in the open field till father-in-law Devo or mother-in-law Kanku cleared throat or shouted from distance to suggest "Time Up."

It was late in the afternoon, Kanku was prattling, "Tell her to complete household work quickly, poor children would be hungry." Bhimo was frustrated; his patience was wearing off.

The moment he saw Chanda; he struck two blows on her back. Chanda screamed, "Go ahead, why stop just at two? What else a husband like you can do." "What do you mean?" Shocked by the shouting and beating the children fearfully mumbled, "Bhabhi came twice to our school, inspector had come... teacher did not allows us..." Bhima spat with a dirty swear, "One day your teacher will get a real dressing from me." When he learnt that some one teased his wife on her way to the farm, he boasted, "Give me his name, I will split him in two pieces."

Chanda was still fuming at the dirty slang thrown at her by Punjo the rogue of the village as she was hurrying towards the farm with Raho and Jelly, young brother and sister of her

husband. Kanku tried to cool off Bhimo and not to take hasty steps, she shouted back at her, "Let him Ma, he is not going to put his words into practice. "The quiet onlooker so far, Devo said coolly, "That could be an insult to me. I have chopped a head of an enemy." "May be in your time... None can go scot-free after touching this Dabhi daughter. "Chanda thought of her family prestige and kept quiet." After all I am a daughter-in-law here; and have a husband. If I spoke some thing out of turn you may get angry with me!" Are we dead that you had to use your hand!" "When persuaded for a while she gave out Punja's name. Still not forgetting that dirty face and those insulting words, "The part that should be covered is not covered then why cover your face?" Bhimo was scolding her instead, "You think I am a eunuch?" "How can say that? What people say is..." The in-laws looked at each other.

Punjo, the orphan had turned vagabond indulging in thefts and loot, was often jailed. His notoriety also earned some prestige with certain policemen. These days, fozdar Shankar Rao was on his 'collection' visit. He will drink; eat chicken supplied by Punja and, collect bribes from poor villagers. Shankar is like cow dung, when dropped it will collect, if nothing at least dust. Under such circumstances Bhimo did not want to face Punjo.

At night Chanda was awake. She patted Bhima on his back, "Bima?" The elder couple was attentive. "Do you remember our talk before our marriage?" "Yes every word of it." You have forgotten my preconditions." "Whatever has happened has happened." "That day you told me, 'Once married to me, have nobody's fear, one whose death is hovering, will utter your name.' Now you are saying 'whatever has to happen has happened!' Look Bhima, my nature is like a rope, it may burn but will not leave its twist. I am leaving you this morning, I am going on my own and will return on my own." "So you want me to look down in society!" "You be sure of one thing that though I am leaving you, your bangles will always adorn my hands." Bhima tried all his tricks but she did not budge.

Devo could not keep quiet, "Aren't you ashamed, the bitch is leaving you." "You want to run after her with gifts!" Kanku threw sarcastically.

Chanda was Kashi and Rayji's last child. She was engaged when she was two year old. Her first fiance died of smallpox. Two years later Rayji found another one for her who was not only younger in age but also very sick and tiny. Chanda had grown to be a very daring but charming girl. Once in Ramdepir's Mela she had seen her sick skinny fiance in the lap of his mother. While returning she met Bhima. The two were attracted. Returning home she revolted before her father and told him clearly, "I will never marry that feeble, infirm kid." Ultimately her father accepted her wish but her father-in-law threatened to kill anyone who would come to marry her.

That winter Bhima had come to sell a cart full of logs. Rayji with his daughter also went to the same market when they met again. Bhima and a police had a fight and Chanda was an onlooker. His muscular body impressed her. Watching her Bhimo teased, about her adventure in taming a bull, she said smiling mischievously, "You all have decided to keep me unmarried...Are you also afraid of me?" "Of course not..." "Why have you remained unmarried so far?" "The way you are waiting..." was the crisp reply from Bhima. When Rayji returned he shared his food with Bhima. When the meal was over Chanda saw a piece of rotla from his Tiffin for her. Chanda managed to tell him, "Fifteen days later on the full moon night come at midnight to take me away, that is if you have decided to..."

On the appointed night Bhimo arrived at the mango orchard and she was waiting already. They talked for long. Bhima also told her about his family feuds between Varechas and Jehras. His father already killed a son of a Jehra hence now it was his turn. Chanda said, "Now you have one more threat to face, from my exfiance's father too." "Well, do they have two hands and I have only one?" Once the two were convinced of

their mutual love, she came out with her condition. "I can go hungry and work hard but if you come drunk and use abusive language or lies to me, I will not tolerate." Bhimo gave his commitments and the two were married.

Devo was still upset after a week about Chanda's leaving so was Kanku and the two wanted Bhima to marry again. Devo managed some loan from moneylender Shambhu from another village as the village baniya Nemchand refused him any more. Heart broken Bhimo was aware of his parent's firm decision. Every one in the village also advised him remarriage to teach Chanda a lesson. Bhimo brought another wife in seven days since Chanda had left his house.

Chanda's parents also did not like the way she returned. Her mother Kashi had a quarrel with her husband, "Whatever I said you threw away so far... You defied caste norms, gave her away to western village with which we have no relationship of giving or taking daughters." When Kashi heard of the remarriage of Bhima, she took his side. "At least he did not cut her nose before she left them." Chanda told her, "I will suffer everything without any complain." Her Ma scolded her, "You have come naked what is left for you to suffer?" Rayji was confused, not knowing whose side he should be on! Chanda told him bravely, "I can live alone." The proud father told himself, "Probably I liked this trait of mine in her. But...?" Chanda realised the deep love for her father for her, she decided to be his son.

Devo did not like the way Bhimo behaved with his new wife Amba. He almost regretted his hurry. Bhimo did not turn up on his first night. Amba had brought nine-month-old daughter from her previous marriage. Her first marriage was a disaster. Her husband was released from prison yet maltreated her and would not settle. Ultimately died at the hands of the police. Amba delivered her daughter two months later.

A month has passed with this new husband; Bhimo still

paid no attention to her. At times she felt, "He is such a nice husband one can swallow even opium, couldn't she swallow one little insult?" Once in privacy she mustered her courage and told him "Have I done something wrong?" He shook his head. She broke down... after a while she said, "Have I asked you not to bring her over here? Can't two women stay under one roof?"

When he remained silent she pleaded, "Why don't you say something?" At last Bhimo could no more keep his silence. He confided all that happened before she came, "It's not that I do not feel for you." Tears rolled down from his eyes and she wiped them with her sari. 'Don't cry please, now I will not bother you, your heart is not yours... its not your fault at all.' As per the custom when after month and a half she went back to her parents but no one from her in laws came to take her back.

Once burglars struck on Nemchand's house. Hearing his cries Devo and Bhimo ran for help. They saved Nemchand and his wealth too but Bhimo was injured. The village baniya was known for his greed but he spared nothing in getting treatment for wounded Bhimo in a hospital. Kanku stayed at the clinic and Devo and Nemchand went back to the village. Doctor had advised hospitalisation for a month or so. When Nemchand expressed his gratitude to Devo, he stoutly said, "No, no we are related since two generations. It's our duty."

Nemchand's father had come to this village penniless, with a child just three years old. He died some years later leaving behind three hundred 'Vighas' of land; forty tolas of gold and about thirty thousand cash in circulation as a moneylender. Nemchand had learnt from his childhood to multiply his wealth. He was sure Punjo was behind this burglary.

Kanku in the hospital room was watching outside the window, when her eyes caught a figure hurriedly approaching the gates she got breathless turned around hastily. Bhimo was concerned, "Ma? What is it?" Chanda stood in the doorway. "Ma I came to know all this just last night." She turned to call her

father in. Kanku was surprised to see her daughter-in-law so suddenly but she welcomed them. So did Bhima. "Ma, give them a glass of water." Chanda promptly said, "Why? I am there I will give, do not bother Maa about it." Kanku ordered the assistant provided by Nemchand in their service, to prepare cup of tea for the guests. A cup of tea is a binding agent in our society.

After some talk Chanda asked, "Bapu you better leave now before it gets dark." "Yes, I must go now. I will return in three or four days." Bhimo was relieved to know Chanda was not going back, half of his pain disappeared. Even Kanku felt the relief in the hospital atmosphere. "No wonder my son was shattered in losing such a wife. Such a lively person, her walk her talk her face... how natural her behaviour is. And look at the beaming face of my son after so many months?" Cleverly she asked daughter-in-law to prepare her bed nearer to his cot so at night she can hear his calls.

Kanku and Govardhan slept outside in the corridor. Bhimo softly called for Chanda, she ignored his repeated calls and he threatened, "O.K. then I am getting up from the bed." Immediately she sprung to action, "If you do, then you will be in trouble what does it matter to me?" "If it does not matter then why come here?" "Just to see you! What is left between you and me now?" "Come nearer I want to see in your face if what you are saying is right." She went nearer and they talked for long. Once Bhimo started shedding tears and she wiped them with her sari. "Do you think that my remarriage was done with my approval?" "My heart vouched for it. Otherwise do you think this Chanda ever would come to you?" Before Bhimo could gather her in his arms, she hid her face in his chest.

Kanku had noticed, six months pregnancy of Chanda when she insisted that her mother-in-law could go home for few days for the children. At home Devo was angry but his anger cooled off when the doctor expressed his surprise over his patient's

remarkable recovery. Deva's anger completely disappeared when he and Nemchand licked their fingers after gobbling down testy 'Khichdi' prepared by the daughter-in-law.

Chanda stayed for month and a half. When Bhimo was discharged and all the baggages were put in the cart and Devo directed Chanda to get into it, she said, "Bha... but, I am not coming." Her sentence struck like a bomb shell and just as she was leaving she reminded Bhima, "You have not fulfilled your promise as yet." And she left.

Punjo the crafty fellow under the pretence of providing night watch for farm produce would also arrange for its theft. Once Bhimo and Devo were on night duty at their farm when they spotted Punjo stealing cotton, they fought and Bhimo killed Punjo. They pushed his dead body in to a thicket and burnt it. Unfortunately it was seen by their arch family foe, Ramo whose son was killed by Devo. To settle their family feuds Ramo reported the incidence to the village chief. Next morning the police came and hand cuffed Devo and Bhimo.

Moment Chanda came to know of this event she returned on her own to her in-laws. She saw Kanku had gone hysterical and kept crying; children too were without food. As soon as they saw their Bhabhi they went running to her. Chanda and Raho and Jelly hugging and kissing and crying they clung to each other. She took over the neglected work. She cleaned the house, utensils and cooked meal and gave grass to the hungry bulls and buffalos and milked them.

On the third day Chanda visited the jail. Bhimo was anxiously waiting for this moment. He asked her straight away, "Bapu is taking the blame to save me. Will you like it?" Chanda went to her father in law. "Bapu I have come as your son to look after you all." Devo understood and said, "My child then will you not protect my words?" "How can I call some one as my own, one who puts noose around one's own father's neck?" Chanda's brave reply solved the issue.

At home her little Sister-in-law Jelly asked her babyishly, "Bhabhi where is 'Janamatap, Village folks say my bhai will be sent to Janamatap" She pulled her closely and cried.

Chanda looked after the entire houshold and the farm work including her newborn son who was fair like her and handsome like his father.

The villagers gossiped seeing her working so hard, "It is quite understandable that Bhima and Deva are served with 'Janamateep but why should this woman...?"

VYAAJNO VAARAS

(INHERITOR OF INTEREST)

Chunilal Madia

(Year of publication - 1946)

CHUNILAL MADIA (1922-1968) wrote for twenty-three years churning more than fifty creations. He died while travelling on train from Ahmedabad to Bombay in 1968. He finished his graduation from Sydenham College in 1945, with commerce. Worked for a while at Janmabhumi and then got a job at United Information bureau. He turned to full time writing in 1952.

His contributions in the fields of fiction, play, short story, essays, poetry, one act play etc. earned him laurels. His grip on the folk language of Saurashtra was unparalleled. In 1951 he received Narmad Gold Medal. He received a first prize for his *Antaha Sona* from New York Harold. He was also a recipient of Ranjitram Gold Medal of 1953. He wrote *Vyaajno Vaaras* at a very young age.

About the Story :

The uniqueness about 'Vyaajno Vaaras' is that it has no hero. Initially it appears Rikhav is the hero but he dies half way through the story. The heroin Sulekha is there till the end but appears only twice with Rikhav. The real heroine is Laxmi.

In a way we can say that Laxmi keeps on trying to find her own protector and enjoyer. Her struggle is seen all over the story. Really speaking, Abhasha, Rikhav, Padma are her legal owners. But their ownership is unsteady. While Chaturbhuj and Amrat try very hard to gain that position, Laxmi fails to gain an impressive partner. In the end Laxmi goes back to her creator, the police and gets absorbed in the thousands of petals and enlightens them. Laxmi tries another angle to allure few individuals; takes them on the round, and at times she has no respite till she joins the public service. The pleasure that she achieves in working at the feet of the poorest of the poor, the satisfaction that she draws from the ideal of trusteeship, is given beautiful art form by the author. The storywriter's excellence is reflected in his deft use of colloquial language.

VYAAJNO VARAS

(INHERITOR OF INTEREST)

Abhasha was a big moneylender which was famous in India and abroad too. He was blessed with a son at a very advanced age and every one rejoiced the arrival of an heir. Amrat the widowed sister of Abhasha reigned domestic affairs and at office Chaturbhuj, her one time lover was holding powers as chief accountant. The news of a newborn was all over the town and well-wishers, competitors, friends and relatives thronged his office and home, to share the joy of getting an 'inheritor of interest'. Abhasha's trusted man who brought the news also informed him that the baby had big green mole on his back. It's a sign of good luck.

Jivansha, the staunch business rival of Abhasha, also came to convey his blessings. Amrat did not like it and warned Abhasha, "Let us not show him the child. You know he could cast an evil eye and harm our child. After all he is not our well-wisher."

Many would go to Abhasha to borrow money when in need and Lakhiyar, a Sindhi Muslim was one of them. Chaturbhuj was revengeful towards him. Unfortunately this year the monsoon was not good and his returns were poor. So he failed to return the loan. Chaturbhuj threatened him and managed to forge his thumb impression on the papers of property, to confiscate it in case he failed to repay.

Abhasha's baby was given the name 'Rikhav'. Every one in the household took very good care and the baby boy was brought up with protection and indulgence. As he grew up he was not even allowed to go out to play. Children from the neighbourhood were invited to come over to play with him. His friends included Amrat aunt's son Dalu and Chaturbhuj's son

Odhiyo. Lakhiyar also lived behind Abhasha so his son Junnu and daughter Emi also came to play with Rikhav.

Once the kids were playing "house". Odhio made his sister his wife and Rikhav took Emi as his wife. She was charming and very sweet and looked just like an angel. The children were playing and quarrelling with each other when Abhasha's Guru, Jain *Mooni* Vimalsurji came. He intently observed the children and then called them near him. He saw the lines on the palms of Rikhav and Emi, and looked at their foreheads.

Rikhav was never left alone. An Arab would accompany him even to his school. The company of Odhav and Dalu was not a good influence on this growing child. Besides too much of love and over indulgence of the family turned Rikhav into a spoilt brat. He acquired all the bad traits of spoilt children of rich parents.

Abhasha's prestige was high in society and when Rikhav reached maturity many parents of daughters approached with proposals of marriage. Abhasha would consult his guru and turn the proposals down.

Vimalsuriji's advice was, "Still there is time. Do not hurry, if you do, then you will repent. One star in his Kundali (birth chart) is bad."

Rikhav and his friends were growing up fast; Emi was already married in their neighbouring village. Once she was visiting her parents and came over to meet Rikhav. The childhood love sparked into physical love and in a lonely corner it resulted in sexual manifestation. Abhasha returned home early and saw Emi leaving his bedroom, smoothing her dress. Abhasha was shocked.

Now, the father was becoming anxious to arrange marriage for his son. Just at that time, mayor of a neighbouring town Virpur, Nihalchand Lashkari came with the proposal of his beautiful daughter Sulekha. The girl was not only beautiful but also cultured and a very good painter. She was attracted to Rikhav. Abhasha as usual went to Vimalsurji for his advice. This time Vimalsuriji clearly told him, "Abhasha, I understand your concern for your son but his relationship of the previous life

with Emi comes in the way. My advice to you is do not arrange this marriage because the relationship of the previous birth between Rikhav and Emi is established in this birth also." He also saw Sulekha's kundali and predicted that her stars were very powerful and bright. She is very knowledgeable person and one day she will turn a real saint. Abhasha argued with the Mooni but he did not give his consent for the marriage.

Once when on pilgrimage, families of Rikhav and Sulekha met. Sulekha was engrossed in her painting. She was working out features of her portrait of 'Sukumar' - an eternal youth, born out of commune between manhood and nature. She was not contented with her sketch. Right at that moment Rikhav came and put his palms over her eyes. She instinctively felt, "Here is the face for my eternal youth." She ecstatically whispered his name and turned her face to him. He gently removed his hands from her eyes and their eyes met and were lost in their love.

The parents also felt the mutual love bond growing between the two. And the marriage was solemnised with splendour.

Rikhav's true colours were revealed on their first night itself. He insisted that Sulekha sip liquor from his glass with him. Sulekha was shocked at such ludicrous demand and developed an instant dislike for him. She was angry and their first tiff took a serious turn. Angry Rikhav kicked her but she escaped and spent her night on the terrace. Since that incidence the relationship between Rikhav and Sulekha came to an end. Odhav and Dalu took over the vacuum and drew him towards wine and women. Sulekha, like a devoted wife she could not allow any one to know about her husband's betrayal. She took over the household work and had won every one's heart except one person. So far Amrat enjoyed autocratic rule over domestic affairs. Now she understood that she could not continue with her vile tricks. Amrat changed her tactics and took Rikhav in her hands. She was ambitious to see that her son Dalu become a partner in the family business. In fact Dalu was born out of illicit relations between Amrat and Chaturbhuj. Hence the two ganged up against Rikhav and saw to it that he spent more and more time in the company of wine and women. In no time Rikhav spent more time and money on his pleasures.

Lakhiyar's daughter Emi was married off in a bandit tribal family of Mingola village. All the villagers belonged to a tribe and which indulged in larceny and heinous crimes for their day-to-day living. On the morning of Id Emi took her younger son Gulu to bath in the pond. Suddenly she was lost in nostalgia staring at the green birthmark on her son's back. "How carefree those days were between her and Rikhav ... Even in their childhood plays he would be her husband and she his wife... Rikhav has a similar patch on his back..." Lost in her dream she was rubbing again and again the mole on her child's back. Emi's sister-in-law noted this and asked, "Bhabhi, what is there in the patch, that you are lost...?" "He too has one like this..." Inadvertently she blurted out and repented. Promptly her sister-in-law repeated the incident to her brother. He gave her a cruel thrashing when he traced from an old midwife that another person with such mole was Rikhav, the son of Abhasha of the neighbouring village. This anger knew no bounds; he gagged the baby, tied his hands and feet and threw him away in a jungle.

The baby was spotted in this condition by a group of saints passing through that jungle. When their Guru saw him, he predicted super natural powers in the child and advised them to pick up the baby. The child started growing up in the care of those Sadhus. As he grew he earned the name Chhota Mahant.

Abhasha was growing old and was spending less time in his business and that gave ample opportunities to Chaturbuj to increase his personal booty. He cruelly sucked blood of the defaulters, he did not spare even Lakhiyar and managed to confiscate his house and property when he failed to repay the loan. Lakhiyar was so terrified that when no one, not even Abhasha came to his rescue, he cursed that this business will turn worst, and become a charitable point distributing free food and shelter to poor people.

One day Rikhav along with his friends Dalu and Odhiyo went to a fair in a neighbouring village Mingola. He was lost in a song sung by a dancer... "This grandeur of today... will not survive tomorrow..." The line pierced his heart like an arrow and he got out of the hall much against this friend's procrastinations. Suddenly Rikhav was burning in the fire of his

repentance for torturing his Sulekha... His friends were following him at some distance through the jungle. All of a sudden the gathering dark sky was filled with shrill cry from their friend. When they reached him his body was lying in a pool of blood... the killers were not to be seen any where... Odhiyo rushed to their village to inform Abhasha leaving Dalu near the inert body of Rikhav. After a while Rikhav asked for water... and Dalu went to fetch some water from somewhere. Some passers-by Sadhus spotted Rikhav was losing blood very fast. They took him along to treat him at their Ashram. When Dalu returned with water and found Rikhav was not there he felt that some wild animal might have eaten him up. Not only Rikhav's family but the entire village wallowed in the tragedy. They searched for his body and his killers but when they failed they felt the enemy who killed Rikhav had taken him away...

Every one in Abhasha's family except aunt Amrat tried to take proper care of Sulekha, who was completely broken due to such untimely death of her husband. Now, for Amrat, Sulekha was a real eyesore. Amrat started playing double tricks. On the one hand she told her brother that Sulekha was trying to adopt a child from her maternal side so that she could get his wealth... On the other hand she incited Manvanti, the mother of Rikhav to adopt her Dalu and save the property from going into another family. Manvanti realised that if she remained indifferent for long then every thing will be lost. She persuaded Abhasha to marry her younger sister Nandan...

Years passed and Nandan realised that she could never conceive with Abhasha... She was angry with her sister and started showing her temper. Thus life of Abhasha turned a living hell with quarrels at home and wild tricks of Chaturbhuj at the workplace. Sulekha tried to keep her mental equilibrium by adopting ascetic way of life. She left the in-law's house and started living at the old house of Lakhiyar concentrating on her music and painting hobby... She picked up her half done picture of Surupkumar'... After so many years she was not yet finding appropriate face to attach with it.

Abhasha was badly hit by the family quarrels, he was growing old too and he fell ill... Amrat found her way in such

condition and one day called Chaturbhuj to the house. She reminded him that Dalu was their child not just hers. Chaturbhuj advised Amrat to give opium to Abhasha and end his life so that the property could be easily transferred to her son.

Abhasha lying on his bed got the wind of this conspiracy between his sister and his employee. Suddenly he remembered the words of Vimalsuriji, "Sulekha is a great soul like that of an ascetic whose penance was disturbed in the previous birth." Abhasha called for her father and decided to make a will. He wanted to give a share to Manvanti, Nandan, Amrat and even Dalu... rest to his son if he is alive otherwise the entire wealth goes to Sulekha. When she refused, her father came to persuade her to take care of the property, she cried, "If he had left a child for me... I could have completed my painting of Surupkumar..." When her father told her of the scheme that was hatched up by Amrat and Chaturbhuj, she was disturbed. Ultimately she agreed to take care of the property only if she were given free hand to manage it. "Bapu when I see poor, hungry, crippled beggars, I want to help them, take care of them and provide shelter to them." Her father was happy about her desire and decided to leave for his home, suddenly he felt a shadow moving away from his daughter's home.

That was actually Odhiyo, the son of Chaturbhuj, who reported what transpired between Sulekha and her father. Immediately Amrat was briefed to poison her brother without any further delay. Sulekha's father was faster and managed Abhasha's signature on his will before the enemy succeed in their dirty trick.

Amrat came out with another plot... She took Nandan in her possession. With her help she wanted that Dalu should be made a chief clerk in the office, marriage should be arranged with Nandan's younger sister and Dalu... and Nandan fell into this trap. Then Amrat asked Nandan to pretend as if she was carrying three months pregnant... Amrat also provided her with three bowls of different sizes to be worn to show different stages of her pregnancy. Amrat managed to get a newborn baby at the opportune time and established him as the baby born to Nandan.

Now Amrat was in total command and she took the reigns of the business in her hands. Chaturbhuj could not tolerate this and he gave her a piece of his mind that he knew from where the baby was produced. Amrat bought him over with the promise to make Odhiyo a chief clerk in return he should keep quiet about other things...

The newborn named Padmakant who started growing up under strict vigilance. An Ayah, Raghi was kept to look after the child. Raghi got along well with Sulekha also who was absolutely unconcerned with these new happenings in her in-law's family. When Amrat learned about free movements of Raghi she beat her with a hunter.

One day a big quarrel erupted between Dalu and Odhiyo... In a fit of anger Odhiyo said, "Your mother only got our cousin Rikhav killed..." Dalu reported this to his mother... Enraged Amrat went to the office, snatched away the pen and shouted threateningly, "Out you go... If you love your life never step near this village... I will cut you to pieces and burry you..."

A folk artist's group was visiting the village and Padmakant who was five years old was eager to see their folk drama. Ultimately Nandan had to bow down to the child's obstinacy and permitted him to go with Raghi. Raghi got so involved in the folklores that she forgot where Padma was! Nandan got tired of waiting, started out in search of her son and the maid. Right at that moment someone molested Padma... the atmosphere was strewn with shrill cry of the child. Raghi ran in the direction, so did Nandan and the play was interrupted. The villagers searched and found the dead body of the molested child. This was the victory for Chaturbhuj.

After the death of Padma, Dalu hated his mother much more. Refused to even look at her... he went to Sulekha, got the old will of Abhasha and as per the will he gave the entire management of the property in the hands of Sulekha. Amrat lost her mind and became mad... she was kept behind closed doors where Raghi would provide food to her every day.

Sulekha constructed a huge dinning hall in the memory of her husband where free meals were provided to whoever came.

In no time the place became very popular and Sulekha was searching for a dedicated helper to manage the inn. Raghi was helping her in the domestic work and Lakhiyar acted as the keeper.

One day Chhota Mahant and his group of mendicants came to stay over night. After the dinner they sat outside in the full moon night and sang devotional songs. Sulekha and Raghi could not take their eyes off this Chhota Mahant. His face reminded Sulekha of her first love Rikhav and Raghi was remembering those lovely songs rendered by a shepherd boy... Sulekha was desperate to know who this child was and Raghi wanted to run to him and take him in her arms... the moment she heard a line from the Bhajan, "dropped from the creeper... Oh friend, a leaf..." Raghi jumped... took the Child saint in her arms and kissed his face.

Next morning Chhota Mahant was having a bath at the well... Sulekha was observing his back very intently... The relationship between Raghi i.e. Emi and the Bal Yogi, immediately dawned on Sulekha. She understood that this was the lineage of her Rikhav... He had that green mole on his back the way Rikhav had. Sulekha found the trusted person to run the place. Mahant agreed to take over the responsibility.

One day Vimalsuriji visited the institute and was satisfied with the way it was looked after. He also recognised Raghi as Emi and told Sulekha expressing his happiness, "I told your father-in-law that people have right over this unlimited wealth. Don't you think that you are donating it to poor people... they are taking what belongs to them rightfully." There was a long queue of beggars and Chaturbhuj too was there, he had turned partially blind and his son had run away selling off everything. Vimalsuriji gave blessings to Chhota Mahant and left.

Sulekha's painting of Surupkumar was getting completed... she felt Rikhav was near her as if telling her, "I am not dead... My soul is present in this full moon face with its blemish... in this Bal Yogi... in this face of Surupkumar..."

AMRUTA

Raghuvir Chaudhari

(Year of publication - 1955)

RAGHUVIR CHAUDHARI (1922) was born in a village in a farmer's family. He has farmed during his childhood while studying. He has observed and enjoyed rural life. He completed his higher education and did his M.A. and Ph.D. He used to write in Hindi since his childhood and gained popularity in his college days as a writer. He was a professor in Gujarat College where he taught Hindi. He has contributed in the field of poetry, drama, short story, one act play, and life sketches etc. He has received awards from Gujarat government and Sahitya Academy. His trilogy depicts the period of three generations. He received Ranjitram Gold Medal and award from Sahitya Academy for this work.

About Story :

'Amruta' 'Uddayan' and 'Aniket' are three different characters with different approach to their life. The time cannot be understood in isolation. Amruta believed in the continuation, permanence and indivisibility of the time. To Uddayan present is the reality, and he has faith in it and the third thought that there is nothing like the present. The time that we address as present actually turns past the moment we speak about it. So the fact is that a man lives in the past and with the expectations from the future. That is the reality. This three represented through, triangular life of three persons bringing the interplay of time and space of three places, Bombay, Bhiloda and the desert of Rajasthan. In this triangle, two men are trying to gain love of one woman and the woman's problem is whom to select. This is a story with a love triangle.

AMRUTA

Amruta received her degree in Ph.D and Uddayan and Aniket were at her bungalow 'Chhaya' to congratulate her. Uddayan is a well-known fiction writer, dauntless reporter besides being a professor of Gujarati. Amruta knew him since she was in 9th standard and he had been a great contributor in her progress. Aniket was teaching Botany and was also interested in Gujarati literature. Amruta was introduced to Uddayan two years ago only.

Aniket lived at Sikkanagar in Bombay and when Amruta visited him all of a sudden, he was elated and asked her to arrange for some programme for the day after consulting Udaayan. Then he left to meet his professor. The moment Uddayan heard Amruta on phone he joined her there immediately. Lately he was jealous of the growing friendship between Amruta and Aniket... "What is there in him that I do not have...? The way their eyes get lost in each other as if... Didn't she once even confess to him that she loved him...! And I had explained to her what her feelings, actually ment, Amruta, it is not love... but... understanding. Love is spontaneous... A thing which is accidental I have no control over it... Then what is the use of achieving it? I may wish that she understands me yet how do I expect that she will accept me?' Uddayan reflected time and again.

Aniket's guide wanted him to take up research project in the Rajasthan desert. It was to prevent desertification. Aniket readily accepted it. Amruta and Uddayan had planned for a boat ride as a fare-well to him. Unfortunately, as the boat reached some distance, the sky turned grey and the sea waves became more and more dangerous... in no time it became impossible for their boat to move and the three were caught up in the worst rainstorm. The clouds were ominously dark and with great

sound and thunder there was lightening in the sky. Amruta was scared, stiff and went straight in to the arms of Aniket...the boat lost its balance and the oar slipped from his hand... the boat hit against rocks and the three slipped into the sea. Uddayan was injured seriously on his head and chest. The party turned into a disaster. With great difficulty they reached home. A doctor was called... once Uddayan was alright Amruta went to her home. Amruta found a letter from her sister-in-law under her bed cushion.

Unfortunately it contained more of a structure, "The way you move around freely with two men is not good for the reputation of our family..." This was the last straw to her tight nerves, "What the hell do they think about me... am I a butterfly that would usually fly away?" Then and there she decided to give her reply in writing. After few trials and errors she could pen a courageous reply. "Its I who has to decide what I can do or not do... Hence forth if you advice me this way then I will leave this house and stay else where. I do not want any share in your property. I need my freedom." She read and reread and ultimately tore it up. It was three o'clock in the morning.

Aniket was tense too at the day's event. Sleep had left him; his mind was full of worries... not just for himself but also about new venture and the fear of losing his friends... Next day Amruta went alone to leave him at the station. They were attracted to each other... Amruta felt she was very lucky... Every word that Aniket uttered conveyed only love and she counted herself to be the most fortunate one... As the train was about to leave Amruta pleaded, "Aniket, forget whatever I have been saying today. What do I tell you here? I will wait for you..." Suddenly they saw Uddayan running towards them...the train started and he could barely wave his hand to his parting friend.

Amruta and Uddayan were deep in arguments and she was irritated, "You are talking as if my desire has no place in the tug of war between the two of you... You both want me as a female partner, none of you have observed me in totality, as an individual. Aren't you trying to take refuge in self-deceit by telling me that you love me? If that is so then how can one say that my independence will be respected by you? When we meet

next, you will have to give answer to this question... do think about it..."

On reaching Palanpur Aniket moved towards Kutch. He left Bombay for another reason, that if he were away, Amruta and his friend could get closer.

After some time Uddayan too left Bombay to settle down in his native village Bhiloda, following difference of opinion with the college principal. He sold off his entire property except a house to live in. Amruta also gave up her bungalow Chhaya and started living in Aniket's flat. She started on a job with Archaeological department. Thus the three friends though started their new lives at different places remained in touch with each other.

Amruta, Uddayan and Aniket met for a few days at Palanpur... One evening Amruta while walking saw a snake and she shrieked in fear... Aniket took her in a close embrace... suddenly he felt the old pull at his heart." In this world there is nothing except heart beats...! "He pulled her face nearer making her feel secure in his arms. Aniket was still in the grip of the emotional turmoil but Amruta was coming back to her original self. He admitted. "Amruta... my weaknesses are far deep rooted than what I thought!" "You are not the only one responsible for all these." "No...I feel now that only Amruta can save me and not my intellect." They went home and Aniket went to the bazaar.

Amruta was unaware when Uddayan covered her eyes with his palms, slowly removing his hands he searched deep in her eyes... Amruta tried to get out of his grip... Uddayan's arms reached her shoulder and dragged her nearer... Suddenly he gave her such a push that she almost fell... Frustrated Uddayan yelled, "what a weakling you are?" In the fit of emotional upheaval he gave such a severe slap on her face that she fell on the ground... her bangles broke... Uddayan was saying, "For whom have you come here running...? What powers you still possess..." So violent the grip of excitement was on him he almost physically attacked her and tore her blouse... Amruta was choked with such aggressive reaction of Uddayan that she could not even cry... as if some one took away her voice.

Amruta changed into another blouse and had regained her control when Aniket returned. She kept quiet but Uddayan could not contain his frustration... "I had full trust on two persons so far... Aniket and Amruta... But the two are, in no way different than others... you are steeply drowned into clever perversions and manipulations." Amruta turned away her face from such vile accusations and Aniket while trying in vain to control his anger, broke the hand-rest of his chair... Hurriedly he left the house... He returned only when his temper cooled off. He went and set near Uddayan and said, "Today I have pardoned you... But such a thing must never re-occur," "Thanks... your command will be followed."

Next day the trio went for an outing and for a swim at Balaram. Aniket and Amruta were still at the bank when Uddayan took a swift long swim... When he returned he started splashing water on Amruta... she tried to save herself from his onslaught by running away from him but he caught her from her hand and gave her a big push... Inadvertently Amruta's hands circled around Aniket who had reached the scene. Her hands were like a garland around his neck. Uddayan retorted, "When your married life will reach its stagnation point... this scene will come back to you to trigger your memories of the past."

Amruta lost her cool on such snide comment from Uddayan, "If you cannot see then you better keep your eyes open now... and listen clearly to what I am saying... I love Aniket and Aniket only... and not you." While saying this she got up and planted a kiss on Aniket's cheek... Aniket took a long dive in the pond and said, "Amruta you do not know what you are saying...! By saying this you have insulted yourself." "Please be sure never will this be repeated... I know more about me, Uddayan." Uddayan was staring at Amruta and she turned her eyes off.

Next day Uddayan and Amruta left for Bombay. Uddayan came to meet Amruta who was busy in the kitchen. She thought he would come in the kitchen but he left after waiting for her in the front room. Twice he passed through Bombay but did not contact her. In the mean time Amruta and her sister-in-law patched up their differences and she started visiting her parental bungalow 'Chhaya.'

Uddayan went all the way to Japan. He spent most of the time in Hiroshima and that too in the hospital where patients suffering from the explosion of atom bomb were being treated. Doctors advised him to restrict his visits but first time in his life he realised what pain and sufferings actually mean.

He submitted the report to his office and then went to Sri Lanka via Bombay but returned early because he felt his health was dwindling. He wrote a letter to Aniket about his health but asked him not to worry. After about a month when Aniket saw his friend he was shocked at Uddayan's condition. He was suffering from some kind of disorder in his blood, which the doctors were unable to diagnose. Aniket went to inform Amruta after ascertaining that she had gone back to her father's bungalow. He also called two well-known specialists to examine Uddayan. The doctors advised to shift him to a hospital. Uddayan went to his bathroom under the pretence to get ready; instead he brought a blade kept there and cut the artery in his wrist. Fortunately Aniket entered the room and on seeing his condition he was removed immediately to a hospital. He had lost so much of blood that Aniket and Amruta both had to give him blood for transfusion. The two took excellent care of their friend.

Once Uddayan was discharged from the hospital, Aniket spent three days with him and then left for Jodhpur where his work was in progress. Amruta looked after him, and used to spend late hours to keep him company till he fully recovered and started his work. He had to go to Poona but once again his health started deteriorating. Doctor's advice was to go for change of place and he decided to go back to Bhiloda. Amruta did not allow him to go alone. But when his health showed no sign of improvement Amruta was terribly worried and sent a telegram to Aniket, "Uddayan is not taking good care of himself nor does he listen to me. Please come or advise me; there should not be any more delay in his proper treatment."

Aniket's message came that Uddayan was invited to go over to Japan at his own expense." Much against the resistance of Uddayan, she took him to Ahmedabad where he was once again admitted to a hospital.

Uddayan's health was deteriorating much faster and a time came when he wanted to write a will and he also wanted to see Aniket. Amruta opened a page of a diary and started writing what he was dictating in his hoarse voice...

"I confess that I have lived my life to its brim.

...I believed that there is no God, but know not why time and again I am remembering Him!

...The person whom I loved was not a real love, it was an illusion of love. Today I love all. I will thank two persons. One is Aniket who tried to make me realise facts of life. I consider him to be my friend. The second person is Amruta for whom I tried to understand myself. I have lived in the Second World War by becoming a victim of radioactive rays... I know that time is an eternity... There is absolute similarity between those whom I despised and myself."

It was nine o'clock at night, he was getting more and more breathless his voice was choked... his body was turning cold. Amruta stood by his bed the entire night... The doctors and nurses carried on with their treatment.

Suddenly somebody's heavy footsteps were approaching the room. Aniket almost half conscious entered the room. Uddayan's face lit up with recognition... he raised his head and hand... Aniket was taken a back...and went a step backward... The saline drip stopped... It was eight thirty in the morning... On one side of the bed stood Amruta; on the other side was Aniket... In the space between the two, life that lived to its brim, was lying lifeless.

PARALYSIS

Chandrakant Bakshi

(Year of publication - 1967)

CHANDRAKANT BAXI (1932-1957) joined Bombay University after completing his Master's degree in History. After that he looked after ready-made garment business in Kolkatta. He started writing in his college days. His first one was published when he was 18. His contributions have been in different areas like short novels, fictions, essays, commentaries, history, dramas, travelogues etc. He has published 105 books and some are translated in other languages.

As a professor of history and principal in various colleges of Bombay University, he earned a good name in the field of education also.

About the Story :

'Paralysis' was published in 1967; later included in the curricula of Bombay and Gujarat universities for the question paper on fictions. The Marathi translation of this book has been included in the B.A. (Marathi) courses of Shrimati Nathibai Thakarsy Women's university. Two editions of Marathi have been published so far. Bombay T.V. has produced a play based on the novel. This book is also translated in English and Russian.

The subject here has a psychological basis, where inner differences and the gap between two generations are shown. Today a man gets lonely and when the opportunity to remove his loneliness arrives, he fails to avail it due to circumstances. This is effectively brought out with the characters of Aram Shah and Ashika. Aram does not like to leave the hospital and Ashika does not want to be discharged and yet both accept the inevitable and endure. Aram is cured of his paralysis but how does he cure his mental paralysis? That is why he reaches the place in the end where he was picked up unconscious, at the beginning of the novel.

PARALYSIS

Aram shah opened his eyes. Three dreams...! The first one had hungry, emaciated lions running around. Remembering the dream the professor thought if some one put hay before them they would gobble it. In the second dream, telephone wires were dangling without any instruments in a hall of a palace where the past was frozen. The last dream contained thousands of years old, microscopic body in a bottle, placed in a museum. Across on a shelf was another jar with 6, 7 month old foetus who tells the microscopic body, "Our problems are same. You want to die a little and I want to live for a while. Only our directions are different." He got out of his bed, it was dark still and he gradually walked towards the valley.

Next when he opened his eyes a hospital matron was asking him, "How do you feel?" "Nothing on this side..." His speech was uneasy, smile distorted. Then added, "Paralysis!" Dr. Ishan said curtly, "Leave the diagnosis to us... Your body has stiffened due to severe cold and exposure..." Turning to the matron he said, "It could have been fatal had it been on the left side."

Aram was swinging between consciousness and unconsciousness, his present and past mixed up like a collage. He remembered his name and told the doctor he had no relatives to inform about his confinement.

Didn't he want a son instead he had a daughter Marisa. He held her close, smelt her wet body and told his wife, "This is a Russian name," then also fabricated, "One of Lord Krishna's beloved was also 'Marisa'. The wife objected. "Where did you find such a name?"

The matron was kind and efficient. He demanded a dressing table and that was provided, with a comment, "You

are handsome, looking in the mirror will not make you more handsome." "Beauty lies in one's nature not in..." "Ah! The professor has started." "Once I was a professor but no more. Why refuse me the reflection? This is mental cruelty! Had I been married to you I could have asked for divorce." They laughed, "No please Don't." She readjusted the mirror.

He was down with an attack of paralysis in this beautiful hill station. He was just 49 years old and his belongings were lying at the 'Lake View.' When she came, he said, "I am tired of looking at my reflection. Why don't you come whenever you are here?" "You know you are lucky. Many paralytic patients lose their tongue. Now you are over using it. You must rest and sleep."

He was red with anger. Wife developed problem with uterus and doctor's advice was no pregnancy without treatment. He felt one should have two children. She thought it would be too much. He insisted; a child needs company. She had a miscarriage. Her body felt washed out and with great difficulty she managed to look after the daughter.

Dr. Ishan was content with his remarkable recovery. He could be transferred to bigger hospital. When the matron came he sulked, "I should have been dead... Some wild animal could have devoured me." "If you will think depressively like this then you will take much longer to recover." "There is no need to..." "Oh! Don't pout. My name is Ashika Deep." Ashika was one of the Gopi's of Krishna." The word Marisa was Sanskrit too but it did not mean... he was rudely reminded from his past. "Ashika sounds more Arabic to me." She smiled, "I do not know if Krishna had an Arabic Gopi?" Smiling she left. He slumped in the bed. The curtain rose to his past.

The wife was burning in her bed. "I cannot sleep... If I die you will marry again and poor Marisa will suffer." "Do not talk like that... you will survive to give away Marisa in marriage." They argued for long. He was angrier about her mistrust in him.

Ashika entered, "Today Dr. Ishan left." "That is why your tongue is relaxed too." When she left he tried to get out of his bed, to reach the dressing mirror. He needed a shave, his lips

were dry and chaffed. He limped towards the window. Watching those dark shadows on the green hills... that curious mixture of the fragrance of wild flowers and wet soil; God knows after how long! He picked up a hairpin lying on the dressing table and pinched his inert side of his body. Yes! The pain shot up. He saw from the window, Ashika with a school going child! "May be her son?" And his body slumped on the floor when Ashika saw him, she scolded him, she was any way over burdened since the doctor had gone and the new one had not yet come... She examined him, moving her hand over his insensitive body and he laughed. .. even a woman cannot create any sensation in his body! When she came back after completing her other chores, he asked, "Why don't you allow me to stand near the window?" "Yes, you can but you must not get tired." "You see, I can see many things...Today I saw you going with a child," "He is my sister's son studying here." Talking about her life she mentioned her husband, who died when she was 28. Now she was 39... Just an age when a woman needs...

He was lost in his past... He shivered. "How did you know?" His wife gave a secretive smile, "We know about it." Marisa was crying, "Mom, my stomach is bleeding! Now I will die." "Marisa got her period at the age of 12, even I had mine at the same age." The professor was worried about her approaching exams... "You better explain about it to her." Whole day in college he was remembering Russo's words, "Puberty is a new birth..." His mind will go back to Marisa and her first menstruation... "Sex is born in her..." He became intensely aware of this new stage of his fatherhood.

After a year of that, his wife died of haemorrhage in uterus. The autumn had begun. He cried holding Marisa to his heart. He realised he had ceased to be a husband.

Ashika was standing beside his cot. "Why don't you sleep? If I sat here will you go to sleep?" "On the contrary." "I will teach the ward boy to massage you." "Yes, if you touched me it will ignite..." He smiled, "May I smoke my pipe now?" She filled it after cleaning its bowl and lighted it. He inhaled deeply at it. She removed hairpins from her hair and stroked her hair wide on her back; he was drinking this personal overture of the

matron rather. She admitted, "I too need sleeping tablets." She helped him to sit up in his cot and they played cards for some time putting pins and pipe on stake. He lost heavily. "I still can give one more thing to you... A goodnight kiss..." "I do not play with such useless stakes." She had that mischievous smile on her lips. When she left the room she was humming a rosy song from an old film.

The new relationship between dad and daughter was emerging. Marisa was now 15 and she was growing up. She had matured, physically and mentally. She was sharing bed room with her father since her mother died and both had no inhibitions to share some of their intimate daily chores like changing clothes... At time he watched at his figure in his dressing mirror and reflected, "at the age of 42, I can marry a younger girl than Marisa and produce kids like a pig... There should have been an act to put husbands on pyre with their dead wives." Marisa would chat about her day's event at school in her under garments... At times they would go for movies and hotel dinners sitting side by side. Often in her schoolish voice she will joke at him, laugh and tell him, "I love you dad." They would order pastries and coffee. Marisa was turning more beautiful and taller than his late wife.

At times he will be reading late into the night, listening to the rhythmic breathing from a woman's body to whom he can give nothing but fatherly love. After the age of forty man's body finds freedom from tensions and oppressions of sex.

He shouted, "Ashika!" Why are you shouting?" Her face was stern. "I can move my toe... I can feel... give me your hand. .. I want to stand up." She examined his responses and he was excited... After a while exhausted. "Naturally you will be tired with me being so strong and you are an old man."

Once Ashika asked him, "Didn't you ever feel like marrying?" "If I said 'no' you will think I am lying..." "Yes, you are lying... but I will accept it. Otherwise in future you will hesitate to lie before me." It is difficult to break away from your past at the age of 49 years. He was turning the pages of her album, he commented, "Our smile has changed... It is more serious, deeper and more artificial." "Yes, now turn to the next

page." "I am proud of you, this needs a stronger chest!" She filled air in her chest, smiling coquettishly, "What do you think?" Then added three spoons in his coffee to which he objected, "I will get diabetes." "Then I will give you insulin..."

All this was lived before with Marisa... They were taking a vacation on a mountain and were given a night's halt at a very old guesthouse. Marisa was afraid of sleeping on another bed in that frightful room. A dog was barking under their window, he threw a stick and the dog ran away. She slept, closely hugging him through out the night. He was conscious about it: it was improper to sleep like that. He dreamt of his wife very fair and clean, they were at a game sanctuary, watching and shooting wild beast. Suddenly Marisa started running. They ran after her and found her under a tree... with many bruises and nail marks on her body. His eyes were wide open. He had over slept. Marisa gave him news that their manager's dog was eaten up last night by a wolf.

Ashika was dressed in a sari. His eyes were fixed at a pendent of her gold chain. She served him toast; butter and spreading home made jam lavishly." Please to so much... I will put on weight." "Once I will take you to a hotel in the foothill. There the view is beautiful and they serve very good almond soup. Today I am making lunch for you." "Why cook for me? Are you in love with me?" He joked flippantly, so was her answer," You may take it as that." "Then I will have to eat whatever you cook... please no lunch for me." He guffawed, and she gave a him serious look.

"Daddy do not feel like cooking today. . " "Hay! Feeling lazy at your age of eighteen?" And he gave hard pat on her back. And she shouted, "Daddy your hand is very heavy..." Dad when you talk like that you sound very orthodox... why call yourself old? Frankly, I don't want to live too long... It is better to live like a racing horse for 10, 15 years rather than living for 100, 120 years like a turtle." "No! We live like a snail waiting to be swallowed by a chicken, which cannot even escape. My God look at her! She just turned 18 and talks so maturely. "Daddy that's what I am trying to tell you. One day I will get married...I cannot leave you alone. .. you will need some one

to take care of you. Look, I am grown up now. Another woman cannot harm me any more... Dad why don't you remarry? I know you lost your youth to raise me." He felt the tears welling up in her eyes. "No Marisa my days were not always happy...when your mother was dying... I felt the guilt for her death..." "Why? Because you are alive?" "My God she has matured a lot more than I would realise." "Daddy if you do not lose your temper than I will tell you something... I am in love..." "What!" Aram was losing temper, setting questions one after another. He learnt the boy was a older than her by eleven years, he was a lecturer... age 29... His mind was blowing..."Daddy don't get excited... His mother is working in Coffee Board, she is a widow... that is why he took little longer to finish his education while working... I know him since six months... They are Christian..." And that blew his top...She went into their kitchen. He tried to cool off. She will be a good wife, she is efficient, learnt household work since young age because of the demise of her mother. He rationalised in the end with himself, "Why think that a Christian sons-in-law make bad husbands... Many girls get married at 18 and they adjust far better..."

Ashika started physiotherapy. Gave him stick to walk. He complained of pain but she was firm. "I cannot hold pen?" "Why do you want to hold a pen; to write autobiography? May I fill your pipe?" "That will make me think of marriage." "At our age we marry in small bits, we need not marry wholly!" They did not want to sleep so they chatted for some time.

He was waiting for Marisa and George in their favourite restaurant sipping his cup of coffee, looking around he saw few fat men and women. He hated fat people, who appear as if bags of fat and semen were tied around them...

Like typical father he asked him, "You will marry her. She is very young and not mature as you are... what about the difference in your religions? "I will try to make your daughter happy." "Happiness just for my daughter is not enough... you both must be happy."

Their arguments continued even at home. In the end, Marisa won. He wanted marriage with Hindu ritual; they fixed

it at marriage registrar's office... He tried to reach the place in time but traffic jam; his temper and giddiness were insurmountable hurdles. When he opened his eyes, the newly weds were sitting next to his bed. Marisa wanted to cancel their honeymoon and George was sulky. Marisa said, "Daddy you had nervous breakdown." He looked at her husband he turned away his gaze. Aram closed his eyes playing with her soft fingers. He was interfering in their marriage. He was aware.

Ashika came in like a morning sun stood behind him turning her fingers into his... Was she interfering in his life or he was disturbing her? He took his first walk. It was too tiring. New doctor Nath was coming. Aram was in his depressive moods again, "Why am I here?" "You were dying, now you are all right." "So he is going to throw me out... Will you work after I go away?" "Why? Are you thinking of marriage at this age and condition?" "An unhappy one if single is most unhappy but two unhappy ones together can become most happy ones."

George had a better offer at Trivandrum and he left without Marisa. She wanted her father to come along. Aram persuaded her but she could not leave her sick father unattended. George was angry, "Whom have you married? Me or your father?" That was his most angry comment.

Ultimately she joined him. Her first letter contained, "He did not get the job because he was late in reaching there... I read your letters four, five times... He does not like me to write to you in Gujarati... But you must write only in Gujarati..." Another letter arrived marked private. Which told him about her suspicion that he had another wife. He wrote immediately, "I am extremely worried have not slept for days... Write immediately otherwise I am coming there." Her letter prevented him from going there lest her hot-tempered husband should insult him.

Next letter informed about her pregnancy... She wanted to come but how could she in such a condition? His reply was full of advices to the expectant mother... "Do tell George to write some time!" Instead came his phone, "Marisa committed suicide this morning..."

The past merged with the present... extremely agonising..." Why did I survive? Ashika, please do not ask me anything more... Take me to my bed I want to sleep."

She discussed his case with Dr. Nath and possibility of relapse... then she returned home. "I am getting involved with this man but what, when he is discharged? It is too late at thirty-nine years of age..."

He had come to the hill station to forget his painful past and suffered paralysis. Marisa's dead face haunted him... She lived a life a short one like a racing horse. It is difficult to break away from the past at the age of forty-nine.

Ashika asked, "What will you do when discharged?" "Go back to the place from where I came."

PARODH THATAN PAHELAN

(BEFORE DAWN)

Kundanika Kapadia

(Year of publication - 1968)

KUNDANIKA KAPADIA (1930-1968) was born in 1927 in a middle class family from Saurashtra. She did her B.A. with English and then completed M.A. with Gujarati from Bombay University. She started writing in her college days, has written novels, stories and philosophical commentaries. Her story *Premnaa Aansu* won international award. Her novel *Saat Paglaa Aakaashmaa* was selected for Sahitya Academy Award. Psychological treatment of subject is quite noticeable in her fiction. She, as an idealist writer, has the position amongst front line writers in Gujarati.

About Story :

'Sunanda' comes to live in a village to forget her inner unhappiness. She gets involved in problems of the village, trying to find their solutions. She meets Anjanashree, who has achieved high spiritual awareness. She gets to know Satya is in decay through descriptions of Kumar but is not able to find inner peace. Not only Sunanda but seek the entire human race suffers from this problem and seek solution to human suffering. Sunanda loses Satya, as soon as finding him. Same way modern man turns his face away when pleasure, reach nearer to him.

PARODH THATAN PAHELAN

(BEFORE DAWN)

Sunanda's train was moving fast, but faster were her thoughts. "If Devdas were here...? Then, will I run away to a remote village like this? Devdas killed my desires." The train stopped at a small station. Monsoon has just got over, green colour scattered all over was an alibi.

A carriage driver asked, "Where to Madam?" "To the municipal dispensary." "So you are our new doctor sahib? We were waiting for the past two months..." These were the first words of welcome in her new adventure. The carriage stopped a little away from the village. The residence cum dispensary was old, but with adequately furnished big rooms. Kalu came running to pick up her luggage. "Today Kumarbhai will bring your meal; from tomorrow Savita will stay and do everything for you." Sunanda reflected, "I know none here but all know me well. There was a knock from Rafiq the errand boy, "Kumarbhai wanted to know if you arrived by the mail train." Rafiq ran off as quickly as he spoke, "How sweet and lively he is?" Sunanda became 'Su Didi' for Kumar as soon as they met.

Next day arrived the haughty president of the Municipality, Mr. Shivashankar. Sunanda disliked his voice, which was deprived and transgressed all the quantities of a gentle man's voice. "Did Kumar come?" "Yes, yesterday only... very efficient and cheerful." "He is alright, educated youths have left the village... You see here Hindus and Muslims live amicably. This is a medical centre..." "I am a doctor, to me all are patients and not Hindu, Muslim," "I understand, we still observe Diwali and Moharrum together. Their small disputes I solve. I am barrister from Bombay, following Gandhiji's ideals I settled down here." Sunanda was tired of hearing his 'Me' and 'Mine'.

Devdas captured Sunanda's idle moments. He was... free like a bird... "My windows will have no curtains except one Gulmohar." She teased him, "When it sheds its flowers!" "Then no curtain between me and the sky." Devdas would laugh a lot, his words were ostentatious and full of imagination... Her mother warned, and said, "These are traits of intellect not of heart."

Devdas left for Germany, within a year of the marriage, with a promise to call her. That day never arrived. Completely shattered Sunanda, finished her M.B.B.S. to get immersed in work. Eleven years she suffered, ultimately she decided to burry herself in this peaceful place, with helpful villagers. Amina brought back the reality. Poor Amina and Abdul were over protective of Rafiq since they lost three sons. Talking about them Kumar said, "Didi, I realised the reasons for good people's sufferings only when Satyabhai explained to me. "Who is this Satyabhai?" Sunanda asked.

The patients thronged the dispensary. A policeman Yusuf suffered ulcer. The powerful policeman would eat plateful of 'bhajis' junk food at 'Farsan' shop, but when in pain he became absolutely helpless. Businessman Nandalal; suffered hypertension. He did not rest lest his brothers would loot him! Govind's wife Mani suffered from hysteria. Her mother-in-law illtreated her when her husband went for his job to a nearby city. Whenever he is at home she will be normal. He was suspicious if she was acting! Lalita was another woman who received merciless beatings from her suspicious husband Dipchand.

These illiterate, orthodox, villagers tried to cope up with plethora of problems only with their native wisdom. Kumar brought Lalita with dried scars and swellings. Lalita whose beautiful face had a deadly calm on it as if the injured hand or ear were not hers. Sunanda, while cleaning her dried up wounds asked, why didn't she come earlier? Lalit's reply was unexpected for Sunanda, "Kumar was right about you... Didi, I have not come for treatment...wanted to see you... Who knows if I will be alive tomorrow?"

Kumar talked about Lalita's problem, "Didi, what additional pain can touch her when she is already drowned in it? Dipchand

once saw her talking to a vegetable seller and in the middle of the market he pulled her braid and beat her up. He would not let any doctor touch her... Just at that moment Satyabhai came, pulled his arm firmly and said, "Let the doctor treat her." Dipchand felt so scared... You know Didi that was my first encounter with Satya." Kumar always said, "Satyabhai can be described in three words, 'Love, power and peace.'"

Once she saw Haridas! Sunanda asked, "Who is this Haridas?" "He is like a Fakir... There is a story behind him; probably in this village I am the only one who has nothing to talk about."

At times, Sunanda felt like meeting Satya. She asked Kumar, "What is Satya doing?" "Once I asked him, his answer was, 'Awake sleeping soul of people... there is always an opportunity for a person to climb up even if he has slipped in deep ravines.' You know Sudidi what I told him about you? 'My attainment is a personification of love, compassion and dedication...' I know I am praising too much but when you will see him you too will say the same thing."

She closed her eyes and...

"Devdas... Where are you?" Last she had heard from her friend that he was living with a Swedish girl, somewhere near Stockholm. He was nonconformist; would not expect him to be tied to one woman. She took it as a philosophy of freedom... Never imagined it to be an escapist's logical web.

Kumar often wanted to ask his Sudidi why she was so sad? Often while feeling pulse of a patient she would have that lonely state on her face.

Sadhvi Anjanashree was very ill. Dipchand came to take Sunanda there. Moment she saw her she thought, Satya and Anjanashree reached the same goal... though through different path. Sadhviji knew she was suffering from incurable cancer, Leukaemia and yet she wanted to enjoy her death. Sunanda wondered what pain medicine could give to a person who lived beyond pain and pleasure! In fact she explained the philosophy of life to Sunanda. "... I do not ask any one to give up anything. Search within the essence of life and enrich it. To crush ones

own heart under weight of idealism also is violence." Those words of Anjanashree reminded her of Satya.

She remembered her conversation with Devdas about death. He was clear, "I can live without you. I believe in living! You cannot..."

Once Kumar as usual was talking about Satya and she teased him, "You are talking as if your Satya is Godman." "Didi he is more than God... May I tell you something? You too possess immense ability to do well to others but you are crushed under some burden. Won't you feel the flow of his potential?... Aha! I forget to deliver this piece of letter to you; Satyabhai gave it to me yesterday. It contained a Bengali 'Baul' song. "He had also given its meaning... "O! Heart doesn't indulge in useless worry; keep singing... Birds sing... for their own inner pleasure... Tears that flow for whom, today... May he be standing before your eyes when your song is over...!"

The villagers now treated her with new respect when she successfully brought back life in a boy bitten by snake. Kumar said, "You know Didi when we heard that a lady Doctor was coming we were sceptical. We came to receive you. I was cycling next to your carriage." "I did not notice." "Moment you removed your dark glasses to clean your wet eyes... I noticed those round deep eyes, I realised you were quite contrary to what we imagined you to be. I knew only Satyabhai could remove those grief lines from your thin face." Nandlal's wife Shobha came to meet her. This lady from Ahmedabad looked smart and over dressed in this rural atmosphere. Shobha talked freely about her dreams and frustrations. Sunanda wanted to help this sweet but lonely woman! She felt 'this Shobha, Lalita, even myself are moving round and round in a giant wheel.'

The Diwali festival was organised across the river. Sunanda also went there. She met all her patients... Govind and Mani beaming with new joy, bowed to her. Mani said, "Doctor Sahib, he has followed your advice and next time he will take me to the city." Shobha as expected was standing little away from all... Amina and Abdul came so did Fatima who looked clean and tidy and her husband Yusuf was busy in his own group. Sunanda's eyes were searching for that known and yet unfamiliar

face. He must be somewhere... She saw Kumar going behind a tree... she craned her neck just then Shivshankar came and introduced his daughter, Paulomi who was doing M.A. with psychology. He has to be some where here. . .when Kumar, at last reported, "Satyabhai was here," Her heart exclaimed, "He went away without meeting me?" Instead she said, "He did not wait!" "In fact he wanted very much to meet you but we could not find you." She did not understand her eagerness to meet him.

Paulomi pulled her to the direction where food was being served. The clinically expert eyes noted small patch of Leprosy....! Sunanda thought, "Is she aware of the seriousness of her disease?"

Kumar was sarcastic about what Shivshankar and Gaffurmiya spoke. "When the two have quarrels they forget brotherhood, if there is a fight between farmer and business communities they will be together on one side but if it starts between Hindus and Muslims then they will oppose each other."

Kumar talked about his sister Ila who got disillusioned in love because of her parents, she left them forever. "That is when I met Satyabhai and learnt to look at life from a new perspective. Didi I was lying when I told you I had nothing to talk about myself. I am staying in this village with the hope that one day she may return."

Sudidi, reminded him of his lost sister.

Lalit came with new wounds, Sunanda was thinking how best could she help this woman. When Lalita left, Haridas came, "Some day I will kill that Dipchand." Sunanda was shocked to see violence in his otherwise docile eyes. In the evening Haridas gave hundred rupees to Kumar to get injections for Lalita. Haridas stayed in the village, thinking, 'Who knows when Lalita will need my help?' Sunanda was lost in Haridas, Satya, and Kumar...

One day Yusuf suddenly slipped into coma after over eating and two hours later he died. On her way home Sunanda went and met Anjanashree; she often wondered how could one be happy when one was nearer to death? Anjanashree pointed towards the stars and said, "Sunanda, You too will find such enlightened souls. I was young, had no problems, no illnesses.

I was teaching English in college. Suddenly something turned my life topsy-turvy. I was shaken up, and became lonely. I kept searching within me. 'Why it happened to me? Then one day I located the centre of peace within myself... the peace that one sees in the sky before a storm starts on the earth. Probably I got this pain so that people can understand that it is possible to enjoy even when in pain.'

She was sitting under the tree across the river. She knew that this was the life she wanted to live... She was not an ascetic nor had any blind faith in any God. She was love, like flowing Ganga. Will Devdas ever return now...? Can she ever realise that dream of love through him...!

Kumar dropped in, "Didi Satyabhai and I were walking just behind you but you were so engrossed in your thoughts! Satyabhai said, 'I want to meet your Didi... Let's go to her.' But I discouraged him... He says, 'Your Didi is like Laxmi in a Lotus forest.'"

"I did not even notice him! How much I want to meet him... at least once." She dreamt of him many times, Telling her, "I am Satya, The truth within your heart."

Kumar warned her about mounting communal tension in their village. Dawoodai was having difficulty in breathing; Sunanda went to his house, gave him injection and waited until he got better. Rafiq's father Abdul accompanied her telling her not to have any fears. He reminded her of Moharrum and Rafiq's eleventh birthday and reminded her of the dinner invitation.

Next evening some one put fire to the hay stock of Govind...When police came, Shivshankar pointed to Abdul. Kumar felt that his jealousy was behind it. Kumar also warned Sunanda. "Shivshankar is jealous of you and spreads silly rumours about you."

Few days later Kumar came running to her, "Didi Gandhiji has been murdered!"... The village was tense. Condolence meetings were arranged at Ganga chawk. Hindus and Muslims gathered there and Sunanda too wanted to attend but she returned half way when Kumar persuasively told her that her

services might be required at the clinic in case something untowards happened. Suddenly, Lalita came shouting, "Didi! Satyabhai has been injured. He is at Kumar's home."

Sunanda rushed..." Am I going to lose him without even seeing him?" She felt her feet would become numb, the first glimpse of his.. a thin, weak body lying on a cot. She took support of the wall behind her. Kumar reported, "God knows how Rafiq was caught up in the crowd. Satyabhai went to protect him, next moment he was lying on the ground... I did not know any one could ever attack Satyabhai in this village...! How is he Didi?" Sunanda felt his breathing and said, "Seems cerebral concussion..."

Kumar went to fetch her medical bag and she was left alone in the room with the person whom she was so eager to meet. What a face though injured glowing like the morning sun. She once again bowed over his chest to feel his heartbeats... She put her shivering hand on his forehead. She felt like bending over him a little more so that their breathing could mingle in each others... she must admit her heart was drawn to this man. She thought, 'if you called me I would come to you like iron attracted by a magnet...' For a while she forgot being a doctor and became simply a woman. Kumar came with her bag... nothing is to be given till he is unconscious... She prepared coffee for Satya, enjoying every moment of it, the bird within was chirping... hovering over his face touching his eyes with its feathers... Some one came in search of her, she did not want to leave at all. Even Kumar was uneasy but he knew she had to attend to the medical call from another village and she pushed herself away from Satya.

She desperately wanted Kumar to go and see Satya... Kumar came and told her, "Didi, Rafiq died in the feud last evening... so Satyabhai left at the very moment he finished coffee; he has given this book for you... saying that you have done a great deal of work Her eyes sparkled. "Didi, when I told Satyabhai that your eyes always sparkled with unshed tears...you know, what he said?" We will bring glitters of happiness in those eyes one day."

The tears kept flowing through out the night. Again and again, a question came to her. She told Devdas with full

dedication, "I love you..." How can she say that to Satya, 'I love you?' Suddenly there was a knock; Anjanashree was serious. Sunanda kneeled before the dying Sadhvi, crying for her blessings, "Listen to me child, life is a beautiful thing, inspite of pains and miseries." She wiped, Sunanda's tears... and the nobel soul left for its ultimate journey.

She was waiting for two days to hear his footsteps... Sure enough footsteps were approaching nearer and nearer, her breathing stopped. A letter was slowly pushed inside through the slit in the door. It was from Devdas... Written from somewhere in India; and... a knock on her door and the letter shivered in her hand... "Sunanda!" That was Satya at her door, beckoning her...! The unopened letter was pushed in her cupboard... the front door remained closed and She ran from the back door towards the river. She sat at the bank dipping her feet in the river... "Ah! Sunanda get lost in the darkness! To live beyond desires, afflictions, affections... Hari Madhav, take me away from this uncertainty to the absolute certainty... Let it be even death! Or even beyond death... on which bank the path lies!"

MADHAVA KYAANYA NATHI

(MAADHAVA IS NO WHERE)

Harindra Dave

(Year of publication - 1970)

HARINDRA DAVE (1932-1995) belonged to the top literatures of post independence era. He received awards not only from Gujarat but also from state governments of Madhya Pradesh and Utter Pradesh; he also received Sahitya Academy Award for his literary contribution in the fields of fiction, poetry, drama, philanthropic essays, commentaries etc. Madhya Pradesh bestowed the Kabir Award and Gujarat honoured him with Ranjitram and Narmad Gold Medals. In the field of journalism, also he was recognised for his contribution. *Madhava Kyaanya Nathi* is his best writing and is also translated in Hindi and Marathi.

About the Story :

The story begins with the search of Naradmuni for the eighth son of Devaki and Vasudev. His search lands him in jail of Mathura where the son was born, to different places like Vraja, Mathura, Gamyak jungle, Dwarka, Pravarshan Mountain... but he was always late because Krishna would have disappeared to another place. Thus though eager to meet each other both could never meet and the urge to meet runs through the fabric of the novel untill the end. Narad gets so involved in his search that he becomes one with Krishna. What the author has taken from legends turns into story. Since time immemorial human beings are waiting for the arrival of the Supreme Power who will destroy evil and re-establish posterity... this hunt continues but the illusive character is never manifests but slips out from his hands. He feels his presence, notices his impressions but is never able to see him. The contemporary man has his overburdened past and is pining with expectations of future, in this process he messes up his present... if he can reach Krishna...! Like Narad the modern man is running for a Gandhi... Wars like Kurukshetra happen in every era. We had our Kurukshetra at the time of partition, followed by the blood bath of communal violence and Godse shot our Mohan, the way Krishna was killed by an arrow of a hunter. Thus the way Krishna deceives Narad, Gandhiji too slipped away from our hands. Our hunt had to continue. Einstein said this about Gandhi, "No one, just after twenty-five years will believe that such a person lived on this earth." Arjun too says similar thing about Krishna "Krishna was such a rare personality that it would be difficult for future generations to believe he existed some generations ago on this very earth." Narad saw portraits of Krishna on walls of Mathura but no respect or love for him. Today in government offices one does spot photographs of the Mahatma but where is that love and respect?

This story depicts the catastrophic conditions of the modern era through a mythological background.

MAADHAV KYAANYA NATHI

(NO WHERE MADHAVA IS)

The Yamuna was in spate. Narad heard wave after wave hit against the door of his hut... All the good things were being washed away. Outside he saw a middle-aged man with a bag over his head wading through the swollen Yamuna... Swiftly the water gave way... Yes one can see the glittering sand of its bed in the faint light of the half moon on eighth night of Shravana. Narad was astonished but kept walking towards the jail of Mathura where Devaki had delivered her eighth son.

Narad entered the cell, found an empty basket in a corner with a feather of peacock... instantly drawn to its magic blue green colour... as if mesmerised he picked it up and pushed under his waist band. There arrived Kansa fuming and spitting anger, "Narad! You have come to see the infant... That was a gaseous doll... when I threw her at the wall... the blood did not loose out, she slipped into the sky saying," Kansa, your death is already born..." Kansa shook with fear... And Narad's never ending search for Krishna began...

Vrishbhanu spotted a body on the bank of the river Jamuna... She resembled his daughter Radha! Even Nanda vouched, "Aha! Yamuna has returned your lost daughter Radha!" Distant shouts of shepherds reached them, "Nanda gher Anand bhayo! Jai Kanaiyalal ki... (All joy at Nanda's house... Salutations to Kanaiyalal)" Radha opened her eyes wide.." Whose son? Devki's?

In a year Kansa was mortified. "Akroor... People gossip that a year back Putna sucked to death a new born. A shepherd killed Shaktasur... Now Kalinga is leaving Yamuna...! Why!" Narad entered saying, "Yes, I too heard those rumours. I heard Nanda with his two sons Balram and Krishna, is leaving for

Vrindavan. They say that Krishna is Devki's son!... Why haven't you killed him yet?" "Oh! Narad I am exhausted killing so many infants... Let him grow up a bit more than..."

Narad reached Vrindavan... "Why the touch of this soil feels different?" He saw at Nanda's place Krishna's flute and headgear with peacock feather. Nanda, with pathos dripping in every word, said, "the salver of Gokul and Vrindavan has liberated Mathura... Oh! Narad... When Devaki took him in her arms, we felt the Govardhan fell on us." Yes, He is there in those tears of Nanda and Yashoda who was standing behind the door, in that latent tunes of the flute... Narad on meeting Vrishbhanu said, "I have not seen such love... agony even in heaven...!" Turning to Radha he said, "How much pain you want to inflict on one who is existing in every fibre of yours?"

A chariot was approaching... Entire Vrindavan, their breath held, waited... Yashoda was mumbling, "Didn't tell you...? My child, I have kept your butter ready...!" Radha's ears were glued to the ground to hear the notes of the flute.. that was Uddhava from Mathura with a message from Krishna... Jayadrath was preparing for invasion on Mathura, since two of his daughters became widows following death of Kansa... Radha screamed, "This cannot be the son of Nanda and Yashoda"... "So you are his Radha... while taking bath in Yamuna he uttered your name and he almost lost consciousness... This flute, he has sent for you." Radha could not contain her tears. Uddhav described the love lorn Krishna.

Nanda advised Narad, "When you meet him in Mathura don't talk about our miseries to him... He has the responsibility for the whole of Aryavarta." Narad confidently knocked at the gate of the palace in Mathura because he was sure that Krishna and Balram were discussing war strategy inside. Uddhava answered the door. He said, "The two just left from the underground way to meet Parshuram." Narad sighed, "The cup filled with nectar turned into a mirage!" He was surprised that portraits of Krishna were hung at many places but his real image was not reflected in any eyes. As he found in Vrindavan! "Every where I heard just one thing, "He is not here..." Only Trivakra convinced him of His existence. She was the ugly one who turned beautiful at His touch. She told Narad, "I needed the

bridge between ugliness and the beautiful soul which He provided..."

Narad saw restless, tortured Aryavarta where religion was fast disappearing... and was shocked to see huge army of Jarasangh waiting outside Mathura. "Such huge army to attack Mathura! Or will it follow Krishna!" Jarasangh sent message inside the fort to surrender Balram and Krishna or else face war. When he realised that the two had gone to Pravarshan, he wanted to destroy the city but his advisers and even Karna prevented him saying, "It will not be befitting to our glory specially when those shepherds have left..."

Jarasangh and his chief Hansa went towards Pravarshan. On the way they met a drunkard and asked him the way to Pravarshan Mountain. After some running around they realised that they were misguided... Much later they learnt that the drunkard was Balram. Narad was worried what if he failed to recognise Krishna like Jarasangh... He asked Parshuram, "Bhagwan Jamdagneya, why don't you describe to me how he looks?" "He knows how you are pinning to meet him. People search for him but their motives are different... Here is Krishna's message for you, 'Tell Devarshi Narad, I am also eager to meet him. Once I am free from all these wordly responsibilities I will definitely meet him.'" "I wonder, whom am I searching? Who is Krishna? Is he the son of Vasudev or of Nanda? A killer of Kansa or...? The Aryavarta that was united under the emperor Bharat was now split into pieces by his descendents... Look at Dhrutarashtra... Watching his son Duryodhan taking revenge on his cousins... Even Yudhishtir, considered to be the reincarnation of religion, is eager to sink Duryodhan's rights... Today leaders have lost their greatness... People have become dishonest.. have lost their capacity to love... to cry... to laugh... I am searching for Krishna with the hope that this splintered world will unite under Him, and this decomposed humanity will be composed once again..." Parshuram persuaded him to stay for few days more but Narad politely refused, "How can I? I hear the echoes of war... if I could meet Krishna before the battle cries for total annihilation... the war could be prevented." "But if you failed to meet him?" "Then... even Krishna will not survive..." The two shuddered at this eventuality.

When Jarasangh met Narad he was boasting, "I am going to burn this whole mountain and your Krishna and Balram and all their supporters will be the sacrificial offerings to the fire God..." He warned Narad not to climb the mountain. He sent even the army of five thousand soldiers behind him but oblivious of all that Narad continued with his upward journey, jingling the wire of this Veena and words "Narayan" on his lips reverberated like roar of a lion. Even the soldiers bowed to the Devarshi in reverence. Jarasangh threw a lit arrow and in no time the fire engulfed Pravarshan Mountain. The trees burnt like timbers, metals from the earth melted and an avalanche of big boulders, started crushing every one... Just at that moment his chief came running, "My Lord, Balram and Krishna are not on this mountain, they are in the tents of Duryodhan and Karna in disguise of messengers. Jarasangh cried loudly "I am going to kill the two, single handed..." And there stood Balram. Fierce battle was fought between the two and just when Balram was to kill Jarasangh, a voice came as if from nowhere. "Stop... my brother... God may want him to die differently." Narad who was circling the mountain valley reached the spot three days later.

Krishna sent Akroor with special message for Pandavas to attend the Swayamvara of Draupadi. Akroor spotted Narad going in the direction of Mathura; he passed the message to Narad for Pandavas. They saw hoards of refugees going and Akroor told him, "They are Yadavas... are to be rehabilitated at Raivatak mountain. Balram had already gone there for making arrangements.

Devarshi delivered Krishna's message to Yudhishtir. He felt Narad was frustrated because he missed Krishna wherever he went. "May be your search is external... If frustrated, you see Dwaipayana and Markandey Muni you will know because how deeply they know Krishna though they have never set eye on him." Now Narad went towards the North thinking, "So far I was searching Him in his past now let me look for Him in his future." The next day as he progressed towards Himadri he met an angry Karna. Krishna humiliated him at the Swayamvara of Draupadi, Karna too had gone there as a suitor. He warned Narad, "If he meddles like that in our affairs then war will erupt."

Draupadi prayed for Krishna when her husband gambled her away to their cousins. So intense was her chant that Narad too joined with the rest in the hall.

Narad went to Dwarika; he was surprised that no one was aware where Krishna was. He had received another message from Krishna. Devaki told Narad, "Krishna often remembered you." "Yes Maa... Probably the strings of my veena do not have that intense craving which I saw in the eyes of Draupadi, or Radha or Yashoda...!" Narad you are lucky to have seen that infant in the eyes of Yashoda... Ah... Once... I served him butter... and his face turned absolutely pale, beads of perspiration glittered on his forehead... he got up... said, "Maa I am not hungry.' He ran to his room, after a while Uddhava came and said, "Maa, Krishna says, 'never serve butter to me again.'..!"

Krishna negotiated with both the cousins to ensure peace. He told Duryodhan, "In this war, The God of death, Yamraj will be victorious. For you and Pandavas there will be nothing left but devastation..." Dhritarashtra was relieved to know that Krishna had given his army to his son; he felt now they would win the war. Bhishma was clear in his reaction, "With or without weapon, Krishna is with them."

Arjun brought news that Yadav's army had a divided opinion about whom they should side with that was why Krishna gave his army to Kauravas. Brushing aside the scepticism of his brothers and supporters Yudhishtir said, "Krishna personifies duty and religion... In future no one will believe that He ever existed on this earth... We are too near Him to understand him."

Narad spotted Balram offering oblations in sacrificial fire on the bank of Saraswati... Balram was offering Bishma, Dron, Abhimanyu and many others to the Lord Yamraj. On seeing Narad, Balram poured out his fury, "You know my brother is not with me, my army does not obey me, Krishna's ideal is to establish just world but at what cost?" "The price is nothing, if justice is secured... When justice is wiped out, with it disappears culture... Balram it is better if such cultureless world is extinct." Balram was flabbergasted at Narad's words. "Has

Krishna told you this? Or are you so attuned to him while in his search that you speak his words?"

Satyavarma the personal messenger brought the news from Kurukshetra. "The war has begun... Krishna gave long sermon to Arjun who was hesitant to fight against his own people..." He explained, "Partha, you are a mere executor, I am the creator and destroyer of this universe. I am Brahma... from whom the three Vedas were born... I am those three letters which exist in "OHM"... I am Narad... the Rushi of all the Gods." Balram fell at Narad's feet, "We remained untouched though lived so near Him and you have become one with Krishna even without seeing Him!"

At the battleground Karna came to receive blessings from Bhishma who was lying on the bed of arrows. Bhishma said., "The sacrificial offerings has to start since the Yagnya, 'The Holy Fire' is on." Karna wanted to know if Bhishma remembered those words of Krishna, Bhishma said with a sigh, "Can one ever pass a moment without Krishna!"

Duryodhan admitted before Salya, "Even if I win I will give up this world...!" He cried before Shakuni, "Do you hear Krishna in the flapping of Draupadi's clothes...? I can hear Him in her screams..." Shalya told, "Duryodhan, now that you hear His voice, defeat will never be yours."

Narad hastily reached the battlefield... Krishna's different faces flashed before him..." the one I had seen in the eyes of Yashoda, Radha, Devaki... Where is that face today? He created many miracles but where is the one that I want to see? If I met him today I will make him realise that there are very few who love Him. Majority is afraid of him."

The moment Satyavarama gave the news of Karna's fall, Balram walked away from the sacrificial pit.

Narad was watching the scene of carnage at Kurukshetra... he told Uddhava, "How much lies... sins He has tolerated! Krishna has created this destruction... Arjun used that eunuch Shrikhandi to throw arrows at Bhishma...! Dhrushtadyumna chopped Dronacharya who was unarmed...! Arjun killed Karna

when he had no weapons in his hand... Oh! Uddhava my faith in Krishna is dwindling too." "But Devarshi you have not heard the whole story yet... "Ashvathama not only killed all the sons of Draupadi in their sleep but even murdered the unborn foetus in the womb of Uttara... the last descendent of Pandavas...! I was also losing my faith in Him and Justice, at that very moment Krishna took the dead foetus on His lap and pleaded, "If even jokingly I have not uttered a lie, or have missed observation of the codes of the battlefield and have not respected Justice and religious leaders than Oh! almighty! Let the life flow in this last unborn grand child of Arjun."

Narad reached Hastinapur on getting news that Krishna has gone there to attend the crowning ceremony of Yudhishtir... But... there was no sign of jubilations anywhere. On the way to the palace he met delirious Bhima, "Look at this fountain of blood... Did you hear that cracking sound of my mace on Duryodhan's thigh?"

Pandu brothers looked at each other when Narad asked them where Krishna was? Yudhishtir explained, "Following news of infighting among the Yadavas He went to Dwarka." Arjun added, "But He was eager to meet you and said, 'I lived for Narad.'

At Dwarka the scene was more devastating... Yadavas were intoxicated emptying barrels after barrels of liquor. Defying even Balram they fought and killed each other... Infuriated Balram started killing them all... When he saw none left, he threw away his mace and walked to the seashore. That is where Narad found him completely lost in his meditation. Narad bowed to him and left in his search.

Narad on seeing Uddhava asked him where Krishna was? "We are nearer to Him... or rather, may I say we are going further away from Him?" They walked towards a jungle... Uddhava pointed at a figure... Some one was resting under the Ashvaththa tree, on a mud platform, eyes closed, a sole resting on the bent foot... Narad ran and threw himself at his feet... his heart thudding against his ribs... tears flowing... then peace dawned on him... felt a warm drop on his head and he looked

up... An arrow had entered from the sole and pierced his heart... That was the blood dripping from Krishna's heart... Suddenly with deafening blasts the earth around them shook... the trees started falling resounding sounds of the sea waves approached them nearer and nearer as the sea broke its limits to engulf Dwarka...

Uddhava was rambling on, "Krishna exists in your wonderings... Narad. Centuries later also He will exist in the hearts of His devotees... Poets will search for Him in the pangs of separation of Radha in the affection of Yashoda and Devaki... More than anywhere He is in the vibrations of your Veena... Narad, wars will be fought in every era. The fervent desire for Krishna will persist... There will be mourners wallowing in their miseries of separation... Yet the world will survive, with that penance."

SONAL CHHAYA

(GOLDEN SHADOW)

Shivkumar Joshi

(Year of publication - 1970)

SHIVAKUMAR JOSHI (1914-1987) was a renowned writer of the post independence era. Besides novels he has also written short stories, one act plays, travelogues, critical reviews of plays etc. He has received Ranjitram Gold Medal, Narmad Gold Medal and an award from the Sangeet Natak Academy. He was a talented actor also. He was born in 1916 and he passed away in 1988.

He has written thirty-five novels. *Sonal Chhaya* is considered one of his best novels. It is psychological fiction written in the first person.

About the Story :

The novel is psychological in nature. Sharad has married a daughter of a rich father. She expects that her husband should also execute all her orders. He was given a position of a manager in his father-in-law's office. Tired being bossed around he leaves them and settles down in Calcutta. He finds a diary of the previous tenant Amulya and he cannot but go through it. His own marriage was not fully realised. While reading the diary he too like Amulya falls in love with this girl Piyu. He identifies completely with the author of the diary and gets involved in its future happenings. This gives, interesting psychological touch to the novel. The book is written in the autobiographical style Amulya has narrated his inner emotions through the diary and Sharad speaks out his own reactions which shows the psychoanalytical treatment of the story.

The writer has also conveyed through the character of Piyu that if tribals were given education, they too could join the main stream of society.

SONAL CHHAYA

(GOLDEN SHADOW)

I was transferred to Calcutta and was keen to live amongst Bengalis, and wanted to be identified with Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, Charuchandra Bhandari and many such bachelors of the first state cabinet. I found a flat of my dream, owned by Nandubabu who had good experience and impressions of Gujarati. He occupied the ground floor. A couple from Uttar Pradesh stayed on the first and I was given the top floor with furniture of the previous tenant and managed to get a servant Siddheshwar. I found many books left by Amulya Mehta, the previous occupant, and started going through some of them. Amulya had the habit of writing some comments in red pencil whenever he found any thing worthy of this comments. e.g. In a page of 'Shakuntal' where the love between Shakuntala and Dushyant was described he had written in the margin about his similar kind of love for 'P'. My curiosity to know Amulya was satisfied to an extent by Siddheshwar and as the days passed, my curiosity to know where this man who came here from Gujarat disappeared...!

My research started from the data provided by servant and those side comments made by him in his books. I learnt that Amulya Mehta was a noninterfering kind of person, ardent lover of nature, becoming a recluse as the time passed and of course, a bachelor, loved by all.

Once I threw a party and invited some of my Gujarati friends along with the Badriprasad and his wife Sushmadevi, my first floor tenants. Even Nandubabu spent some time with us. Rushikesh and Tarini from Baroda provided classical music.

The beautiful sari enhanced Tarini's simple appearance. Also the way she touched her husband while singing and looked intoxicatingly into his eyes were infectious to those present in

the party and Badribabu too gave greedy looks to his over painted wife Sushma. I felt as if this married couples was trying to convey to me, what I was missing in my life as a bachelor. Nandubabu even warned my friends to see that I marry before it was late otherwise I might spoil some happy couple's life or get involved without seeing caste or creed... This comment on my character really upset me. Sharadbabu was a suspicious man of you because of the way you looked at me?" Rushikesh knew something about Amulya, who as per his knowledge lived separate from his wife before divorce. Tarini added that women of good family would not trust him... once the guests left Nandu babu called me and gave me further information about Amulya.

"He had all the qualities of a gentle man... How old are you, 28? But you almost look as if you are 32... Yes what was I saying? He was passed 45 when he looked 35 years only!... You see, those days Dr. Sudhir Chakrabarty and family stayed on the first floor... Poor fellow had to leave Calcutta because of Amulya... But Sharad tell me why haven't you married so far?" Nandubabu transgressed the discussion... "You see Nandu babu, the characters of Ravindranath and Sharadchandra are so embedded in my mind that...I do not see any Gujarati girl matching those characters and a Bengali girl does not come forward to throw a garland over me..." And more experienced than the two illustrious personalities Nandu babu, slipped into the description of his wife Ginny, "The most ideal, beautiful wife... was Savitri... Lajjavati... Annapurna... Urvashi in..." His voice mellowed he stopped then came back to the same topic of Amulya.

"A daughter of stepsister of Shyama, Dr. Sudhir's wife, was absolutely uneducated, uncouth village girl Reva had to come and stay here since she lost her mother... she was hardly 13, 14 or 15 years old..." I was disappointed that her name did not begin with 'P'. One of Amulya's clipping said, "Oh! 'P'... 'P'... 'P'... you have turned such an enigma that I cannot solve it!"

Throughout the night I could not stop thinking about Amulya and by the time it was dawn the Sun came up, Sharad's place was taken over by Amulya, so much so that I felt Sharad

was another person's name. I could not even concentrate office work so I called on Tarini, had dinner with them and returned late. Nandubabu was waiting for me.

"Where did you have dinner... at Tarini's place?" The old man was back to his tunes, "Amulya also did not hear my warnings... Reva was dirty, solvently, her hair full of lice... she would go on scratching her head all the time... Where would Shyama find free time out of gossiping with neighbours about her wealthy parent, to keep the girl clean! She would send Reva to borrow this and that even from Amulya... "Then Nandubabu got up and gave me a diary written by Amulya... And asked me to return it in the morning and never utter a word about it to any one. "Do listen to this old man's warning. I do not want another Gujarati to go in his way..." I disliked this regional prejudice and registered my opposition, "Nandubabu, you think the young generation has no social norms...? In fact we are open and frank..." Our arguments went on for some time then giving the diary he said, "This was to die with me... But you are like my son... read and use your own intelligence." I was over eager to read it.

Yes, Nickname of Reva was 'Piyu'. As I went on reading I felt the man was really great, he was talking about awakened 'self'... so much of honesty! He had commented, "I am experiencing a storm within me... If I do not remain alert to it, it will pass over my dead body... I feel those innumerable social beliefs are blowing at me... pointing their elongated fingers, calling me a criminal..."

Going through this introduction of the diary I felt as if I am listening to an invocation to a new Raga...

The meeting was arranged with Vanmala through their common acquaintance... His eyes were devouring her beauty... They were married and was provided job in the factory of rich father-in-law. The early months of married life were like short-lived comas in a sentence. Vanmala's brother was jealous of his brother-in-law and often ridiculed him before others for his small mistakes... Amulya noted "Why should I confess crime which I have not even committed...? The day his brother-in-law insulted

Amulya and on hearing the scene even Vanmala took his side. Amulya decided to quit their job. His father-in-law also paid no attention to the event. Amulya took up job in the Chamber of Commerce at Calcutta. Vanmala refused to join him and in the end their marriage ended; the expatiate divorce decree was received by him at Calcutta. Amulya commented, "I wish that the distance between us be never filled again... be blessed with your life, your people, your viewers... I do not think my body or mind will ever grow old..." I was startled at his confession, "When I came to Calcutta it was like swimming through seven seas... and then as if on its golden beach I was lying to dry myself..." The end of the chapter on Vanmala...

"Didn't I tell Rupa... there is no one in the universe who could fit into my imagination... and she cried... but I was unmoved..."

The Chapter on Piyu began and I was all attention...

"She entered my life with invisible attraction... 'Where... is Maa? Has Baudi gone to... bazaar? Do... you have... I want... sugar!'" Her aunt had sent her for sugar... Her dusty, thin face, dry hair, all was thrown behind by her brilliant eyes... I could feel the earthen fragrance of East Bengal in appearance, a feel of East Bengal in her words... Then after she often came for milk, tea powder, sugar... now often she visited as her right rather than for her begging mentality... Gradually her frequency and duration of her visits increased. Further Amulya wrote, "Once I asked her name, she said, 'Piyu'... The sound of the cuckoo bird penetrated by heart... I asked her again and she repeated, 'Piyu'. My mother called me by that name.' And she talked at great length about her mother..."

Once I asked, 'Piyu, don't you ever brush?' 'With what do I clean them? Some times I rub charcoal powder...!' Next day I brought toothpaste and taught her how to use it?"

Then after he gave her soap and oil and comb and during Puja he presented pair of clothes too. He started teaching her Bengali. Her progress was faster and noticed by others too. Her aunty probably overlooked all these and Amulya used it to his advantage... Now Piyu was out of those rags... the gem started

reflecting its real sparkle. I felt, while reading the diary even I was falling in the love with Piyu... Piyu did not allow Amulya to go away anywhere during Puja festival. The excuse was whom would she show the new clothes when she wore them! To her consternation the sari that he had presented was too short...! You see Bengali girls do not wear *odhani*; the way a gujarati young girl wears half sari. Amulya narrating the incidence tells us, "I noted, her body was developing the curves... and I was hungrily drinking them all in. 'Hey! Do not look at me like that! What have I come to tell you? They think I am a stupid girl... why don't you teach me English?' I was admiring my own creation like a sculptor, eager to put new life into it..."

"She suggested one day, 'You eat fish... it will keep your hair long and black. I will bring Hilsa fish for you.'" It was stomach ranching experience... Behind all these she was not trying to convert me but indirectly was inviting me to partake her love... Moment she realised I just could not take Hilsa; she stopped... The silver streaks were now visible in my sideburns and that absolutely transparent blue lake of Piyu was expanding before me... And I was waiting for her invitation! Since last two years...!"

I am falling in love with Piyu... Where is she?

"Extremely agitated Piyu said, 'Amulda...! You go away somewhere... My aunt and uncle say, 'Something has happened to the young people here... They are putting up posters with slogans for non-Bengalis to go away from here! I don't understand what has come over the youths of our street?' I told her I am Indian and am not worried about such things.

Since Piyu and Amulya started going out... People of their street too observed and some even disliked... Once a crowd of youths came over with stumps and hockey sticks to threaten Amulya to leave the area. No one came forward to protect him... Those were the boys to whom Amulya had gifted cricket set... Piyu came running... standing before Amulya, shielding him, she shouted, 'You cowards! Aren't you ashamed to harass this man when he is alone and you in such crowd? He is like my brother born to the same mother...' Depicting the incidence Amulya

writes, "The sentence struck me like a bombshell from sky. My dream palace that I had constructed brick by brick suddenly crashed."

After the occurrence Piyu never went up to see him and one day Dr. Sudhir left Calcutta for Jamshedpur... The day they left Amulya waited since morning to hear knocks on his door." I wanted to ask for her pardon... I wanted to dispel the misunderstanding from her... Oh! You a big fool... the person whom you considered your big brother was a voluptuous person! The other day when she hid her head on my chest and cried... Once she came at middle of night to switch off my radio... she had pulled up my shawl and rubbed her fingers in my hair... was it just for nothing.

I became so involved with Piyu and Amulya that I too started waiting to hear that knock on my door.

Three months after Nandubabu expired, there came the knock. I opened the door...' Piyu!' ...She asked with surprise in her eyes, 'Who are you...? Where is he? Are you related to him? He seemed to have told you everything about me!' I must confess I was relieved to note that she had no *sindoor* in parting of her hair nor she had those ivory white bangles!

She started talking to me as if she was talking to her Amulda... Her uncle had established sound practice at Barrackpur and she was staying at a hostel to study nursing.

I felt the intimacy growing between us; I pulled my chair nearer and she said, 'We used to sit like that...' Our talk went on and on... In the end she said, 'I feel as if I am talking to Amulda...' I wanted to beg her to treat me at par with him... I wanted, gradually Amulya to be replaced from her mind with myself. Her uncle was fixing her engagement with his colleague doctor and she had come here to get permission from Amulya.

She talked about many of their secrets without any inhibition. We started our search for Amulya. Once Nandubabu had told me that Amulya might have joined Ram Krishna Mission. I went there and was told that he was rejected because his desire for renunciation was not natural. On getting a lead I met one

Champa Begum who said, "Amulya was very fond of Kabir's Bhajan, specially, 'Meri Chunadi me Pada gayo Dagh' and the line, 'Kahat Kabir dagh tab chhute, jab sahib apnave piya'... he will make me repeat it again and again.'

Ultimately my search for Amulya led me to Hardware... and I spotted him singing amongst devotees the same line. When the crowd dispersed, I approached him. Moment he opened his eyes he knew my purpose to see him was different. "Amulya bhai some one has sent me... come back... with me to Calcutta" "Yes, you don't have to tell me any thing further... You being a Gujarati, Nandubabu must have given all the information about me. Reva must have come... Do tell me frankly aren't you in love with her?" I asked him in the end, "If Piyu came here will you not remove your saffron garbs and pick up her extended arm towards you?" After a long pause he replied, "Sharad, I am searching the definition of *Dharma*," I told him, "I am going to send telegram to call her over here." Suddenly we were talking frankly with each other and I told him about his diary, I also told him all the secrets Piyu told me which he had not mentioned in the diary." He stopped in his track, "Has Piyu told you all those things? Then send her another telegram to stop her from coming... Sharad, all that was fabrication... I have taken utmost care to avoid such eventuality." "Then this means that she too had such desires to be..." "No Sharad... it might have cropped up later on as she matured..." "She is coming over here and if she does not see you then she may do something unexpected. The glitter of resolution lightened up his eyes, "In that case let me not be a spectator standing aloof. I would rather be a director..."

When I pointed at the figure standing on our back on us, Piyu gave a shrill cry. She almost lost her consciousness to see his saffron clothes. He turned towards us and said, "Hellow Reva,... No 'Piyu.' Then Amulya asked me to fetch the food, which he had kept ready for her. How do I describe, when my own heart was so erratic what was going on in their hearts! Later on Amulya told me, "She wants to live life of her own but there is a vacuum at present and you may get in there."

She had stretched her self to sleep and I was sitting at her feet on the same berth feeling those pangs whenever her toes touched me... I wanted to be Amulya... When she got up I could not prevent asking what he said... Piyu looked out of the window..." Why did you tell him all those things that I confided in you? They were not false! I allowed you to know my secretes... He told me, 'Piyu, when I reached the shore after swimming through the seven seas I found you like a well of sweet water... More I scratched its soil for water, it went deeper in the soil... He could have drunk straight, I told him. Before we reach Calcutta I wanted to confess to her, "Don't you understand what I want to say? Piyu, I love you..." Here I used the address 'You' as a singular person... I want your answer..." " Yes I will give one which will turn out favourable to both of us... and he has ordered me to be happy... I will come running to you when I feel like obeying his orders."

Every morning my ears want to hear those footsteps... and that knock at my door...

KOI PAN EK PHOOLNN NAAM LO TO

(DO TAKE ANY FLOWER'S NAME)

Madhu Rai

(Year of publication - 1970)

MADHU RAI (1934-1975) was born in Dwarka situated on the banks of the Arabian Sea. He had primary education at Dwarka and completed his middle school level and college education at Calcutta. His stories were published in well-known magazines since his college days. His first ever short story collection, *Bansi Naamni Chohkri* (A girl named Bansi) earned him a name and established him as a modern story writer. He has written fiction and plays and has gained a position among the writers of repute. His novels have been televised into a serial named 'Mr. Yogi'. *Koi Ek Phoolnu Naam Lo To* represented play in Gujarati language for national T.V programme.

About the Story :

This story has unique place among the experiments created in the field of literature during the post independence era. One cannot give a traditional title of fiction, drama or diary, since it contains all the elements of different categories under the general writing. Therefore till today it is considered an unparalleled experiment in the field of literature. This psychoanalytical treatment of the theme gives exclusivity to his creative work. The play has comedy, mystery as well as psychological touch. It reflects the complexity of human relations.

KOI PAN EK PHOOLNUN NAAM LO TO

(DO TAKE NAME OF A FLOWER)

The curtain rises in the auditorium. All characters are lined up on the stage. Pritum addressed the audience. "This is a mystery play... any one, from this intelligent audience can find out who is going to be killed and who is the killer, I will salute his intelligence."

Kamini, Pathak, Sundar, Swati, and Keshav... all the characters are lined up graphically on the stage. Pritam continues, "One of this is going to be murdered and it will be committed by one of them."

Kamini throws a side-glance in glaring lights of the stage. notices a man sitting in the front row... In a moment the curtain will fall... seconds are ticking... the time is flying... the audience will disperse... Suddenly Swati jumps towards Pritam... snatches his pistol... one... two... Kamini pulls it out from Swati... grinds her teeth...aims the nozzle at man sitting in the front row... closes her eyes and presses the trigger... echo of the shot engulfs the audience... The man in the front row slumps and blood starts oozing from the wound in the chest. The spectator's cries fill the auditorium... Agitated Kamini shrieks... "Shekhar Khosla... This is the opening of the play."

Introductios of the characters begins. First arrives, the play writer Keshavlal Purshottam Thacker. He has written play, "Raat Raani." The second actor is Jaggannath Mahashanker Pathak. He adopts foreign plays and stages them. His dramas generally do well on the stage. He is a director and Kamini used to do lead roles in his plays. Under such circumstances both of them fell in love with each other. He has made up his mind

to marry her after completing ten shows of the play. For thus he may have to live away from his father. He wanted that his next play should be in original. Swati Pritamlal Soni, the third character, her age is thirty-six years. At times she acted with her husband. She had no children and was craving to have one. She ardently wished that this month she would miss her period... and would be completely heart broken moment she would get her periods. The fourth is Sundarraai Anantraai Desai, the brother of Kamini, a real rogue, always after girls and is full of vices. He used to blow money after a girl named Nayana. He would bully Kamini and squeeze money from her. Even her mother too would extract money from her because many rich youths would played to her tunes. And she would make lot of money from such affairs. Often Kamini resented this and wanted to get out of these troubles. Once when Sundar snatched away some money from her she told him that the money belonged to a friend named Shekhar Khosla who was a friend of play writer Keshav Thacker. He had loaned huge amounts to Keshav and the money was to be returned to him. This friend, Shekhar threatens and pesters Keshav to bring Kamini to him. Consequently poor Keshav was terrified. Since Keshav reported this to Kamini, she wanted to settle this with Shekhar.

Pathak's playgroup was in search of new plot for a drama. During this period, Sundar was passing on a road on his motorbike and a stranger, who was engrossed in enjoying fragrance of a flower, stumbled upon him. Sundar wildly abused and accused him. While talking to him Sundar realised that he was a writer and did translation work for a newspaper. Sundar felt, 'this man can be a good help in the drama world.' So he to persuaded the strnager to accompany him where the drama troupe was having a meeting. His name was Keshav Thacker and he was introduced to all the participants of the playgroup. Even in the meeting Keshav Thacker kept on smelling flower and asked the name of that flower. Some called it rose, some named it 'Parijaata'... Pathak asked if Kamini was there... Once Keshav was dragged into the conversation. He told them timidly that he wrote plays... the members wanted to read his plays.

Keshav brought his play after revising the script for eighty days. The title was '*Raat Raani*'. Kamini liked the play... Pathak

too liked it but felt it was more like a novel. The group also liked it. Pathak asked him to write a satire... gun and murder have to be there. So it was decided to have a play with mystery and murder and of course sex. Thacker was given two months to write. The drama was ready... As per everyone's desire Keshav Thacker was given small part where he will be on stage just for five minute to deliver one dialogue of five words...

"Good evening... ladies and gentle man!"

"Play: Koi pan Ek Phool nu Naam Bolo To

Writer: Keshav Thacker

Director: Jagannath Pathak

Participants:

Kanta — Kamini Desai

Pramod — Jagannath Pathak

Niranjan — Sundar Desai

Jyotsana — Swati Soni

Nandalal — Pritam soni

And

Deshpande — Keshav Thacker...

As the curtain rises Kanta and Pramod are seen on stage as arguing and accusing each other. Pramod tells his wife, "I do not want to listen to any thing more from you. Every thing is over between us..." saying thus he leaves her. Kanta dials Nandalal, "Hallo... Pramod has gone again after quarrelling with me. Why don't you and Bhabhi come over here this evening?" As she puts down the receiver, her lover Niranjan enters. He congratulates her, " My darling, you are very shrewd the way you removed your hubby, quarrelling with him so that we can continue with our sweet talks... I congratulate you on such clever manipulation..." Niranjan tells Kanta that her husband should be told about their affair. Then the two argue who should be telling about it to Pramod... Kanta says, "If you speak about it than Pramod will shoot you." "Not at all... next moment we both

will go to a lawyer and in three minutes every thing will be over peacefully."

Irritated Kamini says, "Then before he shoots you, I will gun you down." The doorbell rings as they are discussing the issue. Pramod returned to pick up his keys and specs. He was in hurry because he had to attend a meeting with director on time. Niranjana passes the keys and specs to him and says, "Kanta and I are in love with each other." "Yes Pramod, what Niranjana is saying is true. Pramod suggests, "Niranjana, why don't you take her for a movie?" Kanta picks up a gun, stops Pramod from going, "You a coward!" Pramod shouts at Niranjana, "You ...filthy ... rogue... trying to entrap my wife... I will kill you." Shocked by the anger of Pramod both of them admit of having cheated him and apologise to him. Pramod looks at Niranjana and says, "Fine! I am leaving... you two enjoy..." Pramod's exit... Niranjana and Kanta go for a movie... And the curtain falls.

The curtain is lifted. Bhabhi (wife of Nandalal) and Kanta on stage. Kanta confesses, "Bhabhi, another man has entered in my life... we are madly in love with each other... this morning also Pramod and I quarrelled... "Then Kanta narrated the morning episode from Niranjana's arrival onwards... Bhabhi also confesses having an affair before her marriage with Deshpande, her childhood friend. He was staying at Africa. "But Bhabhi I thought Pramod and Niranjana would have a duel and I would garland the one who so ever wins..." Niranjana tells me that his soul is pricking him.

He did not even drop me at home."

At night Bhabhi, Nandalal and Niranjana came to Kanta's house. Pramod was typing a letter. Niranjana admitted that he was no more in love with Kanta. Pramod got up and started reading the typed letter. "I, Pramod Patel, the husband to my once beloved wife Kanta Patel-nee Kanta Goswami, hereby declare that as my wife has fallen in love with my most trusted friend Niranjana, my heart is shattered, the charming wife of mine did not consider me up to her level... hence..."

Nandalal appreciated his wife candidly, "You are my ever faithful wife..." Bhabhi admits, "It's not so." Hurt Nandalal

starts, "I Nandalal Patel..." He snatches the paper from Pramod's hands and read further, "... on the date of ... the month of ... of the year ... I have made up my mind in all my senses with knowledge and consciousness, to commit suicide." Kanta gives out loud cry, "No! Pramod, now I am convinced that you love me... Henceforth I shall remain yours only, forgetting this Niranjana."

Pramod: "I abide by my declaration."

Bhabhi: "I will remain your devoted wife."

Nandalal: "And me your faithful husband..."

Pramod: (continues reading the letter) "Pulling together myself with this pistol hidden by Kanta... I end my life." Niranjana and Kanta also want to join in this suicide attempt... Niranjana and Pramod ask Kanta to shoot them first. At that time Nandalal says, "Jyotsana (Bhabhi) was in love with Deshpande before I married her. That Deshpande has returned from Africa... He possessed few photographs with uncompromising poses of Jyotsana, which can bring bad name to her... He has come here to blackmail her and squeeze money. She has given this address to him so he will come at any moment. Any one desirous of death should kill him first and then die... I have promised him to pay money over here. The moment he leaves with the money, snatch it away from him and then shoot him...! The photographs are such that it will drive young people crazy."

Jyotsana picks up the revolver and the doorbell rings Niranjana too wants to murder Deshpande, so does Pramod...

Deshpande enters: "Good evening ladies and gentlemen."

Nandalal introduces him to all: "This is Mr. Deshpande about whom we were just discussing as to who should kill him."

Then Nandalal turns to the audience: All the characters are present here. If any one from this scholarly audience can point out who is going to be murdered and by whom... then I will salute his intelligence. For your information I better tell you that somebody from these will kill... some one only from them.

Bhabhi comes and snatches away the gun from Nandalal's hand and says, "I am tired of all your tricks. I assassinate you, the one who made all of us dance like puppets..."

Nandalal exclaims, “Jyotsana! What the hell are you doing? The pistol is genuine...real”

Jyotsana: “Yes, I am aware...” and she pulls the trigger but it makes no sound...

Suddenly Kamini who was enacting the character of Kanta gets up and comes towards the audience, aims at a spectator sitting in the front line and shoots at him... Every thing is over before any one realised what was happening...

Two persons bring in a stretcher, put profusely bleeding body on it and leave the auditorium...

WELL KNOWN ACTRESS MURDERS RICH BUSINESS-MAN

‘Well-known stage actress Ms. Kamini Desai, shot a person sitting in the front row using a revolver meant for the play, “KOI EK PAN PHOOLNU NAAM LO TO” produced by Natya Mancha on its inaugural night. That gentleman was an internationally known businessman working for multinational industry here, Mr. Shekhar Khosla... No one yet is able to give reasons as to how and why the real bullets were filled in the pistol... Kamini Desai is taken into police custody... so far it is believed to be an accident... but the police's silence raises a pointer at dangerous conspiracy.’

Jagannath Pathak confessed in his F.I.R. that he and Kamini were in love and they had fixed a day for wedding too. Sunderlal desai while replying to said, “There is a scene where a murder is committed on stage for which the pistol is required but bullets are to be fake.” He also said, “Kamini has taken training for shooting.”

Keshav Thacker said in his oral testimony, “I was pressurised to take the role of Deshpande. Sunder asked me to portrary a murder scene in the play. He had also gossiped about another lover of Kamini besides Pathak, who loved her in the heart of his heart though Kamini did not love him.”

Here the writer uses flashbacks...

Swati tells Sunder, “Keshav has written a play after observing our lives.” Sunder loves Swati who is the wife of Pritam Soni. Keshav knew about their rendezvous...

In the second flash back Thacker comes to know about the relationship between Kamini and Pathak. He gets suspicious and asks Kamini to swear by him. Kamini is hesitant to take false oath and hides the truth for the sake of Pathak. Keshav had overheard while on staircase, Kamini confessing about Shekhar Khosla's old attraction for her. She told Pathak, "Shekhar wants again to have relationship with me but not to marry me." Keshav had overheard these conversations also.

Kamini gets life imprisonment... Then after all the characters admit to each other.

Pritam says, "Kamini did tell me about Shekhar's harassments to blackmail her. I advised her to inform about this to Pathak... but she was worried lest she would lose Pathak... He may do something unexpected. I even told her, I am tolerating relations between Swati and Sunder because I do not want to lose her. But very often while on stage I feel like putting real bullets in the revolver and end my life" Thus probably Pritam planted the thought of live bullets in the mind of Kamini. Kamini used this to kill Shekhar Khosla instead of killing herself.

Sunder admits, "This life imprisonment for Kamini is in fact a freedom from me and my mother... My earnings were not enough even for me let alone, my house and its pomp and show... We exploited Kamini... My mother made her aware of attraction of opposite sex; right from her childhood. My mother and me always looked for her boy friends... My mother will arrange for another boy for her. My mother had really ruined her life.

Keshav enters the room after eavesdropping on Sunder and Kamini. He tells them, "I know Shekhar Khosla. We lived in a small room, years back in Bombay..." Kamini asked him what sort of a person was Shekhar... "He is a scoundrel... He says that girls run after him. You are so beautiful that he goes mad after you." Kamini managed more information from Keshav about Khosla.

Sunder confesses, "Kamini found way out from the life imprisonment of my mother, and also found solution to get free from the clutches of Shekhar Khosla. I only had insisted on a

revolver in the play... I have kept on and on pouring poison in her life. Kamini had sent two complementary tickets to Khosla for the inauguration show with Keshav.

Pathak admits, "I have seen Kamini and Keshav often talking secretly... I was suspicious of love growing between them... I only pressed Keshav for same reason to take the role of Deshpande... I filled the pistol with real bullets, few minutes before the scene, expecting that Kamini will shoot the bullets at Deshpande as per the scene... since the bullets are real it will mean an end of Keshav Thacker...I have committed this crime." Indeed He has regained the confidence.

Keshav had undergone a sea change since the death of Shekhar... Now he did not have to live fearing all the time dark shadows of Shekhar. He could now laugh whole-heartedly... a new self-confidence had emerged in him. He built a new house for himself... with new things in it... he would hum a song now and then.

ADHARAAT-MADHARAAT

(AT MIDNIGHT)

Minal Dixit

(Year of publication - 1972)

MINAL DIXIT holds commendable position amongst writer women of modern era. She finished her higher studies in Surat and after completing M.A., L.L.B. she started practicing law at Surat. It was here that she got a first hand experience of inter-personal relations and problems. She even fought a murder case. Her own experiences have permeated in her writings. And that gave her prestigious position among writers. Then after she joined All India Radio and retired as a Station Director. This gave her ample opportunities for writing on various subjects. She is a regular columnist for different newspapers and has also written a mystery novel.

About the Story :

'Adharaat-Madharaat' represents the struggles of women of today. The writer pulls out the heroine from the darkness of midnight on to a road, illuminated by early morning sunrays. She takes radical step after long mental struggle and leaves her rich husband to join her lover. This is an era of individualism and Lalita grabs her right to independence from her husband. Arvind develops an extramarital affair with a girl named Chhaya but the wife is not allowed to meet her friend Vijay. Such a ban turns her into a rebel. Vijay shows her that self-dedication when forced, is no virtue but is exploitation. Lalita is a unique mother who gives freedom to her children that was denied to her.

This does not mean that the author has only propagated modern way of life but has also indicated the shallowness of the modern culture. Since the subject is given psychological treatment one does not find a series of events. The story has a happy ending when Lalita gives up the man who is planted on her by the society as her wedded man and goes in the arms of the person whom she loves.

ADHARAAT-MADHARAAT

(AT MID-NIGHT)

Lalita was enjoying the cool sea breeze and lovely fragrance of the blooms of her bungalow 'Amrit Vel.' Sudden shouts of her youngest daughter Venu, the restless brat, spoilt by her father interrupted her thoughts. It seems she wants tea which her ayah, Kamlabai refused. When mother too joined the opposition Venu prepared a cup for herself...

Lalita had found it easy to bring up 'Tarun and Mrugakshi who were very well behaved in every respect but this brat... Impossible to cope up with her! Her father called her 'Question Mark'... Arvind was a busy manager in a developing mill and she was a bored housewife when Venu was born.

There came angry shouts from Arvind, "Haven't I reminded you a thousand times to.. but who will remember? You women! What the hell you do whole day except swinging on that blasted swing in the garden?" The family book for the code of conduct does not say anything about how to prevent such eruptions of molten lava... Only Venu could cross-words with her father when he was in his ever complaining moods...

Venu suffered from high fever. Arvind and Mrugakshi were of no use in such crisis... Hardly twelve years old Venu, who wanted to be a doctor like her Suman Mashhi had become instead a patient with extremely high fever since last two days. Suman was a childhood friend of Lalita and the trouble shooter for the Kothari family. Even Arvind a tough evaluator rated Suman's I.Q. high when she suggested 'Amrut Vel' name for their bungalow. And why not the name was assembled borrowing first letters from the names of Arvind's family... Lalita decided to call Suman for this medical crisis, after all Suman was a successful medical practitioner too.

Dr. Suman rushed to 'Amrut Vel'... All her efforts and those of a specialist failed and very suddenly Suman had to put consoling hands on her grieved friend's shoulder... Venu's sudden demise created a vacuum in Lalita's life. When Arvind, Mrugakshi, and Tarun who came from out station to attend his sister's funeral resumed their routines. Venu's pet dog Tiger could not hold on for long and died. Life became tougher for Lalita because Arvind was losing his patience and Mrug though helped with household chores could not replace vivacious Venu.

Suman took Lalita in her folds... She took her along to visit slums, observe their problems and try to help in finding solutions... Lalita realised how difficult life was for the common man.

Arvind was leaving for Calcutta on official tour. Lalita was reticent about it inspite of Arvind's efforts. He said, "Lalita, are you the only one who is missing Venu... What about us who are alive-Me, Mrug, and Tarun-we all need your attention... This time since Suman is away I have called your cousin brother Subodh and his wife Nina to come and stay with you while I am away." Lalita did not like this indulgence of her husband to solve her problem even without consulting her... Of course when they stayed with her, their happy attitude to life contaminated her too with bit of jovial laughter. Lalita was drawn into their petty jokes, quarrels and laughter, which conveyed their togetherness and love... Lalita became aware of an absence of such sharing between her and her husband. Maybe Venu could have provided this missing link in the family... if she were alive...! Subodh and Nina left after eight days. Nina left her pet cat Bansi for Lalita and first time in her married life Lalita accepted the gift with full knowledge that her husband hated cats. Arvind wanted Lalita to come over to Calcutta and had booked a plane ticket too but she refused and banged the receiver on him. She felt absolutely defiant of her husband's autocratic ways. Mrug and Tarun too were shocked at their mother's emotional outbursts.

Today Mrugakshi was late in returning from her college and Lalita softly asked what the reason was, Mrug flared up. "Mom, do I have to tell you everything?" "But I only asked

you..." "I am not a baby... We, grown up kids, at times do not want to share every thing with parents...!" Her arrogance disturbed Lalita.

Arvind too, on his return gave his piece of mind at this concern for her. More than anything else he was perturbed at the humiliation he felt before his office colleagues due to her refusal. When he got her cool and crisp reply, "I did not want to go to Calcutta... you should have asked me before booking..." his anger flared up. "So I have to take your permission before doing anything for you...Ah! women are women whatever...!" Lalita did not take this lying low and the tiff took louder turn. When she was reminded that she was after all an ordinary housewife, how would she know what it meant to earn! Lalita reflected on her past. She too was a brilliant student but after marriage to Arvind it was more important for his wife to be at home when he returned from office so her bright future was sacrificed at the alter of the marriage.

Lalita and Arvind were about to go out when Mrug's young friend came to visit her and inadvertently he asked Lalita if she were an elder sister to Miss Kothari. Later on when Lalita expressed her surprise about the boy, Arvind's important advice to her was, "Never ask a question to any one which can prompt force of one to lie. Mrug is a grownup person with likes and dislikes of her own." The advice was not palatable to Lalita.

Aiyangars always threw lavish parties and their hall was filled with cigarette smoke and pretentious guffaws of male joking, flirting with unattended girls. She found the atmosphere too suffocating and went out on the dark terrace. A male voice addressed her, "Hello... Lalita...!" "Hey! So you did recognize me, Vijay?" Vijay worked in Arvind's office and was an excellent portrait painter... When Lalita requested him to sketch a portrait for her late daughter Venu, he agreed immediately. Arvind's irritating calls drew their attention and they went in. He could not contain his sarcasm on dinner table, "Vijay, why don't you give up this marketing line! Now the government gives fabulous cash promotions to art... One cannot do justice to two occupations..." Vijay's reply was equally pungent, "Come on, there are many appointed here on fat salaries not on their

abilities but because of their influences..." This sting was directed to the recent appointment of Ms. Ahuja.

One day Mrug asked, "Mom, can I take part in our college drama?" "Why ask me? Ask your dad." "O.K." And Mrug left. Lalita went to the beach and dipped her feet in cool sea waves, when the familiar voice called her and she was frozen. Vijay came there with his painting. Lalita was not aware of her own picture perfect pose when her face was reflecting strange emotions. She was drawn towards the place where he was painting. Looking at his painting she commented, "Do you think a woman has to be only a lifeless model... don't forget there is life behind that face!" "You are right Lalita... how can there be life in my painting if my model does not reflect life? To me, my brush, these colours and even piece of the paper are full of life." He continued with his painting and Lalita observed him silently for a while... in the end the two were discussing the painting. Lalita could even give her negative comments without any fear or inhibitions and Vijay appreciated her points.

Next day in office Arvind threw papers at Vijay for poor returns for the month of June, "Why didn't you bring it to my notice?" "They were presented before the committee and I was given assurance that with better sales of July and August the deficit will be wiped out." "Don't argue with me Mr. Modi." Vijay defended his action stoutly. He even refused to make any adverse comment on one of his efficient colleague when Arvind pressed him to do so because he wanted to remove him from his position.

As Vijay was crossing the road he saw Lalita waiting in her car invited him to get in saying, "I can leave you right up to your house." "In other words you want my company to your home at Parla, am I right?" She dropped him right at his doorstep.

Lalita was undergoing subtle changes within herself. She has started taking interest in the younger generation, participated and even appreciated their hard comments about elder generation. She was gradually emerging into a new person... when Arvind announced his tour to Calcutta for a week and tried to put his

hand around her possessively she could disengage herself slowly...but firmly.

Lalita remained in close touch with her friend Suman. Since last few weeks she had been appreciating her friend's approach to life and her friendship with Dr. Deshmukh. She even mustered courage to snub her husband who once tried to comment against it as antisocial because Dr. Deshmukh was a married man. Suman was forthright in her criticism against marriage, "I will be suffocated if I have to live with the same person day in and day out... Whether it is a wife or prostitute... man's attitudes are same... and yet one relationship is considered pious while the other one is branded sinful."

One fine evening Lalita overheard Arvind's derogatory comment about Vijay to his boss on telephone. Lalita went to Vijay. Vijay welcomed her, "I knew you would come." "How did you know?" "Well, when you are in love with the person with one's photograph speaks volumes." He offered grape juice; she loved it most and wondered how did he know, what her favourite drink was?" She gave him two of Venu's photographs, the pretence for her visit and then told him about something being cooked up against him at the office. His reaction was simple, "Don't worry, I will fight to its finish. I am not angry against Arvind but more so with 'Arvindism'-the autocratic attitudes. I am born under the open sky and will be buried under the deeps of this earth..." Suddenly he became aware of silent tears of Lalita... "Oh! Why Lalita? You are shedding tears! I had been hiding them so carefully...!" the two were drinking coffee discussing grace, basic subjects like marriage and love.

When she reached home an office boy handed her two letters. One was from one of Arvind's colleague who was trying to be helpful to her on one hand and at the same time settling his scores with Arvind. The second was love letter to Arvind from some Ms. Chhaya.

Ms. Chhaya was his colleague in Calcutta office... They met while on work and often their office meetings when ended culminated into personal sessions. Today she was late for their rendezvous and added, "Now you know how I feel when I have to wait for six months... for your arrival here! Arvind, did you

receive my letter at the office address?" "No I have missed it but don't worry no one will dare open my personal letters. "Chhaya had singled him out some eight months back. She was drawn to him for his mastery on the subject and exemplary manner in which he drew others to his point of views. Chhaya and Arvind came closer right from their second meeting. His ego was hurt when Mr Agarwal rejected some of his points showing off who was the boss.

Chhaya's late mother was a Gujarati and she appreciated their business acumen... Today she left her father for card session to one of his friend's group before coming to the informal party. Arvind waited in the terrace with a glass of drink. His guilty mind dragged to his wife... He had everything... power, money, fame! But in Lalita's eyes he was autocratic, angry husband... Those early months were very happy with her... He had admitted to her brother when attracted to her beautiful long traces on such dainty charming figure. She too likes his 'temper of Durvasa Muni'...

In the office party Mr. Mukherji is trying to win her attention... But Chhaya cleverly avoids him. As soon as she entered, Arvind confidently went to her extending his arm and took her in his possession. Chhaya instinctively felt his gloomy mood and immediately said, "What do I do to remove those worries lines...!" He boasted about his self controls which none could disturb and went for some more drinks and stood at the card table... Some how the evening was a disaster. Arvind in the end was little tipsy due to excessive drink and Chhaya had to force him out to take him home.

His temper was out of control when Chhaya was again late next day and he flared up, "You think I have come here to wait for you? You women can't appreciate how hard we toil..." Chhaya sat next to him on his cot weaving her soothing fingers from his hair... and in no time it had its magic effect on Arvind and he even apologised... They went for a movie but he spotted Mukherji in the front row and his temper was lost again... they left the movie half way. Even Chhaya found his temper rather out of place and taunted him, "If you cannot forget Lalita...!" "Why bring her here? Chhaya, are you jealous of her? You

wouldn't understand married people's problems." "What do you think life is easy for unmarried one like me? When will you come out of the stigma that life is different for us? Why be ashamed to express your love and friendship to an intelligent working female friend. Actually this is the greatest insult to our friendship..." She was cut up with him since leaving the cinema hall on seeing Mr. Mukherji.

Tonight was the last night for them together. They continued their session till late night and while wishing a reluctant good bye she presented him with a beautiful pen set and he almost admitted that next time he will throw away all his social restraints to get completely lost in her...

The mother Lalita and the daughter Mrug found new relationship growing between them and one day when Arvind was away Mrug told Lalita, "Maa I want to marry... He is my classmate. You have met him at Mr. Aiyangar's... Oh! Maa Shankar is from Mysore... such a loving person... Maa you must tell Dad, please...!" Lalita was excited too to have won her daughter's confidence and promised to inform her father at the right moment.

Lalita was thinking about Arvind and Chhaya... she had read that love letter of Chhaya's... what sort of a person she must be to have a hold over the calculative kind of a person under her grip? She could not live alone in her house and aimlessly driving she reached Vijay's house.

"Aha! Good you came... I am giving finishing touches to Venu's portrait..." Lalita was wonderstruck looking at the painting and thought, 'He has never touched my hair... How could he bring this reality?' As if answering her question he said, "No, I have not touched your hair but I knew from where Venu inherited that silky tresses...! Her eyes too are like yours, full of question marks... I can read them even in your silence..." "Vijay, what is love?" He looked in her eyes. "When one is in love, the words are rendered useless... Such pure love can only be received in absolutely purified heart." "Even in marriage, one sacrifices everything to bring up a family... Take my example..." Vijay trying to sooth her ruffled feathers, said, "Lalita why are

we discussing all these things? Just to come nearer to each other...! The sacrifice that you are talking about is forced by the custom and the society... it means nothing but exploitation..." Every word of his was drawing her nearer to him. It was now a herculean task for her to remain away from this man. Vijay intuitively changed the topic and showed her some of his other paintings. As she was leaving he put his hands around her shoulders drawn by a new intimacy growing between them.

Arvind was untying his shoelaces while talking to his daughter. Lalita's eyes fell on the bright coloured pen and the thought passed through her mind, "The pen must be still warm with 'her' touch..." He pulled it out saying, "I liked the colour, and it's for you." It almost slipped from her hand and the way Arvind shouted at her Tarun also was stupefied.

Arvind was disturbed when his boss Mr. Aiyangar refused to sign suspension notice against Vijay because he found him an excellent help in company sales. Chhaya on the other hand was quiet for last three weeks, besides at home front Lalita came out with a bombshell about love affair of Mrug with Shankar... Suddenly Chhaya's last letter came to his mind. He ransacked his drawers then called his assistant to search for the letter, which was very important. Arvind was disturbed... He thought of calling Chhaya at her residence but it was bit too early. She might not have reached home yet... He could not use office phone so he left early and went to Marine drive... cool sea breeze cooled his temper to an extent and he climbed stairs to the flat of his school day friend Subodh and Nina. He was warmly received. Subodh even commented about his long lost friend, "There is no change in you since last twenty five years except few added pounds on your waist line." "Well I too, do not find much external change in you... but frankly Subodh you have been changing your jobs bit too often... otherwise you too could have..." "But I do not mind where I am today... Remember Arvind! You wore Khadi in those days and had high ideals..." "Well that was youth... you are foolish Subodh, still clinging to those worn out ideals..." Arvind felt more frustrated at the end of the discussion with his friend and eyes dropping on Lalita and Mrug, on reaching home did not bring any peace to his mind.

Mrug was saying, "Maa our vacations have started and Shankar can be invited to meet you people... Dad is taking too long to give his approval but I better tell you that we will not wait beyond October..." Lalita on seeing Arvind was all attention to him. There were frantic calls from his boss so he called him up and pretended being sick. He was reticent at the dinner too. Lalita tried to make some conversation with Arvind; If Tarun went to U.S.A. for his studies how many years will he be away? "At least for three years. Things are arranged..." Moment Lalita and Mrug were away, he dialled Chhaya and his gloom was lifted.

When Lalita found Arvind in normal self she broached the subject of Mrug's affairs... It took many persuasions and arguments before Arvind agreed to meet the boy and his family but when convinced about their high status in terms of education, money and the excellent calibre of the boy, agreed for the marriage. Mrugakshi's marriage was a lavish affair and even Chhaya was sent an invitation. Of course she could not come but her gift arrived punctually.

Today was Venu's death anniversary and Vijay sent portrait of Venu. Arvind had gone to the office. Mrug was with her in-laws. Lalita was moved that Vijay remembered the date. She went straight to him. Vijay you have done so much for me..." "Please Lalita no such formalities between us... "I know... since I entered your life I have destroyed your peace..." "No never say that again. You have entered my life at a very auspicious time..." The emotional tie was strengthening between them and Lalita was uneasy about it.

She was stopped in her track by insistent call from her husband. She got into the car, "Where had you been?" "Don't you remember today is the death anniversary of Venu? I had requested Vijay to do a portrait and he sent it today..." "Aren't you ashamed to meet a stranger early in the morning?" "It is all right for you to go to Calcutta to meet Chhaya!" Lalita cornered Arvind for the first time. The efficient manager in him took hold of the situation and he offered solution. "Let us come to one agreement.... I do not interfere in your affairs and you do not meddle in mine..." "You are saying this for that Chhaya!

I would have given you more credit if you had deserted me for her. Lalita was disgusted at the shallowness of her husband. He put forward the emotional tension between them since the death of Venu etc.... Even threw his trump card of love that he felt for her and his plentiful gifts... Can a leaf go back to the tree, once detached?

At home Suman was waiting for Lalita. They spent some moments in Venu's room and then Suman broke the news "I am getting married." Lalita knew instantaneously Deshpande was the person. "He lost his wife few months back and..." Mrug also came from her in-laws and was full of talks, gossip and advice.

Arvind was going to Calcutta after gap of four months and he ordered Lalita to pack his brief case. While he was returning suddenly his car created some fault. Fortunately Vijay spotted him and invited him over to his flat till his mechanic examined it. Arvind was impressed by his flat and said, "Vijay, now that you are settled why don't you get married and be happy?" "Happy like you?" "May be I am a realist and not an idealist like you..." "You do not know what real happiness means... Arvind! You accept other's definition of happiness and convince yourself that you are happy..." Their discussions went on and on till the mechanic announced that Arvind's car was repaired.

Lalita was returning from the airport after leaving Arvind... she realised that she was not at all jealous that Arvind would be meeting Chhaya everyday. At home Tarun was over excited about America and American culture with some of his friends. Lalita too participated in this friendly chat. While preparing tea for them she was reflecting that probably the west appreciated strong family life and here we are envious of their carefree ways...

Lalita saw her brother Subodh sitting alone on her garden swing. She went to him commenting that Nina was not to be seen for weeks. "Lalita, she is very ill... she has... throat cancer..." Lalita felt the heaven falling on them. She spent as much time as she could with them. Gradually her condition deteriorated faster... One day Nina told Lalita in her cracked voice, "I hear the bell ringing..." "Who told you that...?" "Fifteen years of

togetherness and lots of love from your brother has given this strength to live and now to die... All the married lives are not always surviving on such perfect love..." Next afternoon Nina was no more...

Life at home dragged on for Lalita now that Tarun also was gone to America. Her relationship with Arvind remained dry and formal... though they lived together in between his visits to Calcutta. Lalita's heart was going through metamorphosis... At last one day she mustered courage to write to Arvind a letter.

"... I find I am a stranger to myself... For years we have lived under the same roof... I have dutifully looked after the family responsibilities convinced that all of you belonged to me. But now I want to live on my own with some one to whom I really belong... I am going where my heart leads..." And she left with nothing but her pet Bansi given to her by Nina...

Vijay was giving last touch to his frame; he gave the title 'Splintered Hope'. His transfer letter had reached him. He was given two weeks to join the Madras office. The doorbell rang third time and he moved away from his painting... There stood the face before him, which he had just completed on his canvas.

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